

Edouard Glissant in Theory and Practice: A Diasporic Poetics of Politics

by

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DEDICATION

To my late Mother Arame Ly

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation explores the oeuvre of Edouard Glissant (1928-2011), a prominent Martinican essayist, poet, novelist, playwright, philosopher, and theorist, who has played a considerable role in the emergence and recognition of French Caribbean literature as a whole. Through a central focus on his theoretical concept and literary expression of Antillanité, I analyze his poetic and political representation of contemporary Martinique and by extension the world in general, years after the “end” of the historic and historical events of slavery and colonialism.

To give a more complete and updated assessment of the aftermath of these particular events, I examine his lesser known works published just before his death in 2011 namely *Une nouvelle région du monde*, *Quand les murs tombent*, *Mémoires des esclavages*, *L'intraitable beauté du monde: Adresse à Barack Obama*, *Philosophie de la Relation*, *Les entretiens de Baton Rouge*, *Manifeste pour les produits de haute nécessité* and *Traité pour le Grand Dérangement*. I argue that, in these “political interventions,” Glissant bridges the traditional divides between the poetic and the political, the theoretical and the practical, the aesthetical and the ethical, as well as the fictional and the realistic to re-actualize and give meaning to his main concepts and political ideologies presented in his previous foundational and far more widely read essays, treatises, novels, and manifestoes such as *Le discours antillais*, *Poétique de la Relation*, *Traité du Tout-monde*, *Tout-monde*, and *Introduction à une poétique du Divers*.

In this dissertation, I redefine Glissant as a diasporic “poetician” who capitalizes on the *événementiel* to expose in an engaging and relatable fashion the controversial issues of identity, race, immigration, and globalization in our current world, which he imaginatively defines as a “Tout-monde.” I examine his key theoretical notions of relation, imagination, intuition, and mondialité as centrally characteristic tropes, which he poetically and politically uses to challenge and propose *alternatives* to the “chaos” prevalent in the world in its totality from the West to the “Rest,” specifically in Africa, the French Caribbean archipelago, and France as respectively developed in the first, second, third and fourth chapters of this dissertation.

INTRODUCTION

Quand je dis poète, je ne veux pas parler de celui qui écrit des poèmes mais de celui qui a une conception du vrai rapport entre poétique et politique. “Solitaire et solidaire: Entretien avec Edouard Glissant.”

When I say poet, I do not want to talk about the one who writes poems but about the one who conceptualizes the true connection between poetics and politics. “Solitary and in Solidarity: Interview with Edouard Glissant.”

Since the publication of *La Lézarde* (1958) [The Ripening], a Prix Renaudot¹ awarded novel, the prolific oeuvre of Edouard Glissant has attracted the attention of many a critic in an umbrella of disciplines in the humanities as well as the social sciences. The attentive interest in the latter's oeuvre has in fact increased with the theorization of his literary expression of Antillanité [Caribbeanness] in his reference manifesto, *Le discours antillais* (1981) [Caribbean Discourse]. Antillanité, which symbolically pictures the diversely complex realities and identities of the Caribbean archipelago, occupies an important place in the genealogical history of French Caribbean thought all the more because it constitutes one of its three main literary canons in respective precedence and subsequence to Negritude and Créolité [Creoleness].²

¹ Created in 1926 and named after Théophraste Renaudot, the founder of *La Gazette*, an influential weekly newspaper in France, the Prix Renaudot is an outstanding French literary prize that is annually awarded to an author of an original novel in French.

² See second part of the first chapter “Africa within the Literary Expressions” in which I define each literary expression as it depicts the representation of Africa and its traces in the French Caribbean fiction and cultural studies.

Glissant's Antillanité is "incontournable" [indispensable] in the analysis of both literary expressions because it is in perpetual dialogue with the latter. In other words, the understanding of both Negritude and Créolité necessitates a deep comprehension of Antillanité as Glissant constantly refers to these literary expressions in a contradistinctive yet interrelating fashion. In one of his early essay, *Poétique de la Relation* (1990) [Poetics of Relation], for instance he describes how creolization, a poetic and political barometer of Antillanité, departs from Negritude and Créolité:

La créolisation, qui est un des modes de l'emmêlement – et non pas seulement une résultante linguistique – n'a pas d'exemplaire que par ses processus et certainement pas les "contenus" à partir desquels ils fonctionneraient. C'est ce qui fait notre départ d'avec le concept de "créolité." ... Les créolisations introduisent à la Relation, mais ce n'est pas pour universaliser; "la créolité," dans son principe, régresserait vers des négritudes, des francités, des latinités, toutes généralisantes – plus ou moins innocemment. (103)

Creolization, one of the ways of forming a complex mix – and not merely a linguistic result – is only exemplified by its processes and certainly not by the "contents" on which they operate. This is where we depart from the concept of Creoleness.... Creolizations bring into Relation but not to universalize; the principles of Creoleness regress toward negritudes, ideas

of Frenchness, of Latiness, all generalizing concepts – more or less innocently. (89)³

As I will analyze in depth in the opening chapter, “Redefining the Black Experience in Edouard Glissant’s poetics,” Glissant’s Antillanité questions the core essence of Negritude and its Afrocentric orientation, which he views in discrepancy with the Caribbean realities.⁴ As for Créolité, Glissant agrees with its Caribbean centeredness but rejects its limited and limiting impetus with its essentialist promotion of a unique Creole identity. He expresses this clear-cut difference in an interview with Tony Delsham of the magazine *Antilla* in the following way: “L’idée de la créolité est que nous sommes un peuple composite. C’est une idée juste. L’erreur est de croire que ce composite est une essence.” [The idea of Creoleness is that we are a composite culture. This is a right idea. The mistake is to think that this composite is an essence.]

In this dissertation, I examine Glissant’s Antillanité not just as a mere poetic vision but also as a political perspective and prospective by arguing how his late works of the last decade politicize the issues that are poetically presented in his early essays, in which he introduces and develops this particular literary expression. I analyze how his “poétique et politique ne font qu’un” [poetics are politics are but one] as mentioned by Thierry Léclerc in an interview with Edouard Glissant. In other words, I elaborate on how Glissant relates his poetics to his politics by explicitly and implicitly echoing his previous writings in the late ones through the repetitions and analyses of key phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in light of important socio-political events, which affect the world in its

³ Translations accompanied by page references are quoted from the published translations listed in the Works Cited unless otherwise noted. Translations of works for which no published translation is listed in the Works Cited are my own.

⁴ See also Jean Coursil’s presentation “Le Détour par la Négritude: Lecture glissantienne de Césaire” [Detour by Negritude: A Glissantian Reading of Césaire].

totality at given times of its historical trajectory. As way of illustration, a great deal of concepts and themes presented in *Le discours antillais* such as diaspora, slavery, creolization, and origin are contextually re-presented in his address to Barack Obama, *L'intraversable beauté du monde* (2008) [The Intractable Beauty of the World] and *Mémoires des esclavages* (2007) [Memories of Slavery]. Likewise, *Quand les murs tombent* (2007) [When the Walls Fall] and *Philosophie de la Relation* (2009) [Philosophy of Relation] are somehow actualized versions of *Poétique de la Relation* and *Introduction à une poétique du Divers* (1995) [Introduction to a Poetics of Diversity], in which he develops in a concrete fashion the fundamental questions of identity, immigration, relation, diversity, and difference.

It is important to note that Glissant's capitalization on the événementiel "n'a pas pour objet de précipiter le politique" (*Les entretiens de Baton Rouge* 55) [does not aim at precipitating the political]. His writing is far from being just reactive and imprisoned into the "urgency of now." In the aforementioned book, he discredits this type of writing as follows:

[D]ans le travail de l'écriture, on oubliait ce qu'il y a derrière les luttes, c'est-à-dire les tremblements du savoir, on n'accomplissait pas le travail de l'écrivain, mais celui, nécessaire tout autant, du pamphlétaire ou du journaliste engagé ou du militant pressé d'obtenir des résultats. (60)

In the work of writing, we forgot what is behind the fights, that is to say the most secret foundations of a culture, the opacities of the being, the trembling of knowledge, we did not accomplish the work of the writer, but

that of, as much as necessary, the lampoonist, the committed journalist or the militant, who is impatient to get results.

In his writings in general and his late ones in particular, Glissant proactively exposes issues that are not just pertinent to his native Martinique or France or any specific country, but rather to the world in its totality. He expands his analytical scope by engaging peoples of supposedly different horizons into his desegregating “Tout-monde,”⁵ where Colonizer/Colonized, Self/Other, Resident/Nomad regard themselves as partners and parts of each other. Glissant’s encompassing approach intends to forge a world that is regulated “not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of “identity” which lives with and through, not despite, difference, by hybridity” (Stuart Hall 235).

My dissertation, which comes three years after the death of Edouard Glissant, proposes a fresh reevaluation of the latter’s oeuvre as a critically important production in Francophone, Postcolonial, and Diaspora Studies. I argue that his late works in particular have contributed in a fundamental way to the enrichment of the main debates in these disciplines through a series of questions directly and indirectly related to the dialectically socio-political relations between the traditionally reclusive and exclusive worlds of the Center/Periphery, the West/Rest. In more specific terms, Glissant redefines, transcends, and deconstructs the binary approaches adopted in these disciplines in the assessment of the (inter)relations between the aforementioned worlds.

In Francophone Studies, this project contributes to the representation of Glissant’s oeuvre as “the most substantial contribution toward an assertively French Caribbean

⁵ Tout-monde comes from the Creole expression “kay tout moun.” It is translatable in English as the Whole world or the World in its totality. I will keep the word in French throughout the dissertation.

literature to date” (Hallward 64). He has explicitly or implicitly influenced the vast majority of the most contemporary literary productions in French Caribbean fiction and critical thought. One of the most salient examples of Glissant’s influence is on one of the pioneers of the Créolité movement, Patrick Chamoiseau, who has in fact collaborated with him in the writing of some of the key works that constitute the main corpus of this dissertation, namely *Quand les murs tombent*, *L’intraitable beauté du monde*, *Manifeste pour les produits de haute nécessité* (2009) [Manifesto for Products of High Necessity], and *Traité pour le Grand Dérangement* (2009) [Treatise for the Grand Derangement].⁶

The contribution of this dissertation to Francophone Studies is not restricted to the French Caribbean context because it opens up to the new literary trend in this field inscribed in the famous manifestoes, *Manifeste pour une littérature-monde* (2007) [Manifesto for a World Literature], *Je est un autre: Pour une identité monde* (2010) [I is Another: For a World Identity], directed by Michel Lebris and Jean Rouard under the co-signature of Glissant himself along with other writers and theorists from the entire Francosphere such as Amin Maalouf, Jean-Marie Le Clézio, Maryse Condé, Abdourahman Waberi. This littérature-monde trend deconstructs the divisive opposition between the so-called metropolitan French literature and that of the former French colonies. In his contribution to *Pour une littérature-monde* entitled “Pour une littérature-monde en français” [For a World Literature in French], Michel Lebris stresses that the principal goals of this new literary trend are “pour revenir à une idée plus large, plus forte de la littérature [...] pour dire le télescopage, dans le creuset des mégapoles modernes, de

⁶ Edouard Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau co-authored the last two works with a vast group of Caribbean artists from Martinique, Guadeloupe, Réunion, and Guyane. The authors of *Manifeste pour les produits de haute nécessité* are: Ernest Breleur, Serge Domi, Gérard Delver, Guillaume Pigeard de Gurbert, Olivier Portecop, Olivier Pulvar, and Jean-Claude William. As for *Traité pour le Grand Dérangement*, the authors include all aforementioned writers plus Miguel Chamoiseau and Danielle Laport.

cultures multiples, et l'enfantement d'un nouveau monde" (41) [to come back to a broader and stronger idea of literature [...] to say the concertinaing, in the melting-pot of modern megalopolises, multiple cultures, and the nascence of a new world.]

Even though Michel Lebris and Jean Rouard, the coeditors of these two main manifestoes, do not acknowledge in their introductions to the manifestoes the influence of Glissant on this new literary trend, it is plausible to argue that the latter has a considerable impact on this project. In *Introduction à une poétique du Divers* and *Poétique de la Relation*, he pleads for the restructuration of the field of Francophone Studies through the questioning of the ghettoizing project of Francophonie in its political, cultural, and linguistic aspects. Like Salman Rusdie, who argues in *Imaginary Homelands* "Commonwealth literature does not exist," Glissant rejects the specific classification of literature into regional categories. Instead, he promotes the emergence of a literature, which "ne domine pas le monde [mais] s'y partage" [does not dominate the world but shares in it] (*Une nouvelle région du monde* 173) by those he denominates "écrivains-monde" [world writers]. Glissant's world writers echo Waberi's in *Aux Etats-Unis d'Afrique* (2006) [In The United States of Africa], in which he defines the latter as those who "n'ont pas de pays. Ils n'ont que des mots, des territoires, et des hommes à chérir en traversant ces mêmes pays (220) [have no countries. They only have words and territories, and people to cherish while traveling these same countries.]

Additionally, the other determinant characteristic that shows Glissant's influence on the littérature-monde literary trend is reflected in his poetic politicization of the notion of "monde." This notion is indeed a central literary tool that he uses in the development of his core concept of identity in the identification of the French Caribbean archipelago.

In his more recent works, Glissant recuperates this notion to elaborate a new reconfiguration of the world in general. He develops the concept of Tout-monde to deconstruct the binary visions of the world by the past adepts of colonization and the new perpetrators of globalization.

This dissertation builds on the scholarly initiatives by major critics of Glissant such as Michael Dash, Celia Britton, and Françoise Lionnet to represent Glissant as a key figure in the field of Postcolonial Studies. This enterprise contributes into the expansion of the field through the introduction of new avenues to key issues and questions centered on the aforementioned relationships between the West and the Rest or Center and Periphery to use the common jargon of the field. My particular contribution is principally directed towards the importance of Glissant's new redefinition of postcolonial concepts of cultural hybridity and diversity in our current world of globalization. It complements previous research on Glissant's linguistic hybridity such as Britton's in her book, *Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory* (1999), in which she retraces the origins of the Creole language to redirect the postcolonial debates on the issue of colonial languages versus "subaltern languages."

Glissant's archipelagic model of cultural hybridity breaks free from the traditional method in postcolonial theory, which fundamentally reproduces colonial tactics to denounce the burdening past imposed on the colonies by the empire. In *Les entretiens de Baton Rouge* (2008) [Interviews of Baton Rouge], Glissant argues that the failures of decolonization were all the more predictable because its leaders merely adopted and adapted the master's model: "[J]'avais le pressentiment que ces luttes avaient été conduites sur le même modèle imposé par ceux-là à qui elles s'opposaient"

(58). [I had the feeling that these fights had been conducted on the same model imposed by those to whom they opposed.] Glissant's transcendental "in-between" discourse proactively echoes and accommodates both central colonial and peripheral anticolonial discourses. Expressed through the Tout-monde concept, this perspective becomes "the inaugural moment of postcolonial imagination that places the spatial and geographical in-betweenness and relationality at the center of his theoretical concerns" ("The Birthplace of Relation" 476).

Besides, Glissant's other important contribution to this field of Postcolonial Studies is the displacement and decentralization of postcolonial questions from the Rest to the West under the imperialized eyes of the colonized. This transitional shift of interest enables the audience to have a fuller picture of the global realities faced by new immigrants within the realm of the colonizer's world itself. In other words, it shows how complex "the periphery, which has been so profoundly changed by colonialism, now in turn causes an equally profound change in the metropolitan "center" (*Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory* 15).

Lastly, in Diaspora Studies, my dissertation contributes to the reexamination of the historic and historical relationships between Africa and the Americas through a series of governing theoretical tropes highlighted by Glissant: cultural geo-poetics, nation-relation, and homeland. In focusing on his late works, I argue that his treatment of the Black experience in the Caribbean undergoes a decisive turn all the more because it revives the debates over the (re)presence of Africa, and its traces in the Americas in general and the Caribbean in particular. Berverley Omerod stresses in "Beyond Negritude" that the decisiveness of Glissant's approach resides in its "realistic"

representation of the Caribbean identity, which offers “a new world view, of which the Caribbean is the center [while] Africa remains present in his system of thought, but not as a metaphor for black beauty or vanished dignity: Africa is [...] an instructive actuality, a paradigm of social cooperation” (362).

Thus, this dissertation encourages a new look at the dis/connections between the black diasporists, which are mainly confined to the series of encounters and influences between writers and theorists of the Negritude movement in the 1920s headed by Aimé Césaire, Léopold Senghor, and Léon Gontran Damas in Paris and those of the Harlem Renaissance in the United States, such as James Baldwin, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and William Dubois. Glissant’s poetic politicization of the Black experience enriches the new Diaspora debates within the entire Caribbean that are largely dominated by Anglophone theorists and Black British Cultural Studies pioneers such as Paul Gilroy, Derek Walcott, Stuart Hall, and Caryl Philips, whose popular works came years or decades after Glissant had theorized in French some of their well-known key concepts of homeland, identity, hybridity, diaspora, and the Black Atlantic.

Glissant reconsiders two of the most fundamental questions in Diaspora Studies namely slavery and colonialism and their impacts on the dominated peoples in the world in general and in the Americas in particular. He deconstructs the traditional interpretation of these historical institutions through a nuanced reconsideration of the latter. In his interview with Manthia Diawara in *Edouard Glissant: Un monde en Relation* (2010) [Edouard Glissant: One World in Relation], Glissant symbolically redefines these historical institutions as follows:

C'est Christophe Colomb qui est parti et c'est moi qui suis revenu ; ce n'est pas moi Édouard Glissant, cela veut dire que ceux qu'on a fait partir comme esclaves ne reviennent pas comme esclaves, ils reviennent comme entités non pas seulement libres mais qui a gagné quelque chose sur la densité de l'humanité et qu'est-ce qu'elle a gagné ? La multiplicité.

It is Christopher Columbus who left and it is me who is back; it is not me Édouard Glissant, it means those who were taken as slaves do not come back as slaves, they come back as free entities but who has won something on the density of humankind and what has it gained? Multiplicity.

As suggested in the quotation, Glissant offers a new avenue in Diaspora Studies, which reconsiders the legacies from these historical paradigms from negativity to potential positivity, as I will develop at length in the first two chapters of this dissertation.

This dissertation mainly argues that Glissant redefines himself to his audience from a hermetic theorist to an accessible author in the works that constitute my corpus. This change is perceived in his capitalization on the événementiel as a means of clarification of his foundational theoretical concepts. In *Quand les murs tombent* and *L'intraitable beauté du monde* for instance, he seizes respectively Nicolas Sarkozy's "Immigration choisie" [selected immigration] and Barack Obama's phenomenal election as the first African-American president in 2008 to shed light on his complex concepts of identity, culture, diaspora, and creolization. From the first chapter to the last one, I will analyze how Glissant deals with contemporary world issues and their impacts on Africa, the French Caribbean, France, and finally his Tout-monde, which imaginatively embraces all parts of the world. I will analyze how he establishes and complements his function of

a literary writer and theorist with those of a historian in the first chapter, an anthropologist in the second, and a political specialist and economist in the last two chapters in his exposition of these actual critical world issues.

In the background chapter of the dissertation as a whole, “Redefining the Black Experience in Edouard Glissant’s poetics,” I examine his perspective on the histories of the French Caribbean from *Le discours antillais* to *Mémoires des esclavages*. The main point of focus is his “point d’intrication” [moment of entanglement] as a defining moment in the renaissance of the French Caribbean archipelago. This special moment when “the rain started to beat the Caribbean” is the most crucial element of his narrative of origins of Martinique in particular and the French Caribbean archipelago in general. It is at the crux of my analysis of his theorization of history in the Caribbean sense, his representation of Africa, and his reassessment of the historical paradigm of slavery in light of the Loi Taubira [Taubira Law] in France.⁷

I will explore his representation of the Black experience in interrelation with those of his predecessors, the Negritudинists and his successors, the Creolists before, during, and after this central moment of entanglement through the development of his “revolutionary” technique of detour in contrast to retour. I will therefore analyze how he emerges as a revolutionary historian who defies the establishment of the colonial chroniclers in his noble endeavor of rewriting the falsified and incomplete versions of Caribbean History presented not only by the latter but also by his preceding Caribbean predecessors, particularly the Negritude bards. I will focus on how he redefines the (un)importance of history by revisiting the actual Caribbean conception of time and the

⁷ Voted on 21 May 2001 by the French National Assembly under the initiative of Christiane Taubira, a former Guyanese Member of Parliament and the current Minister of Justice in France, the Loi Taubira recognizes slavery as a Crime against Humanity.

historic relations between Africa and the Americas in general through a progressive narrative of the historical events of slavery and colonialism from the defining moment of entanglement to our current times.

In the second chapter, “The Archipelagic Exception,” I fundamentally center my argument on how Glissant carries on his function of a historian in his narrative of the impact of slavery and colonialism on the French Caribbean archipelago. I examine his rehabilitation of the migrant-nu [stripped migrant]⁸ in his or her enterprise of self-affirmation via an exceptional recollection of the diverse traces inherited from Africa, the Americas and Asia. I elaborate on how the latter transforms the Caribbean archipelago into a referential “cradle of identities” in comparison with the African continent, which is classically regarded by anthropologists, archeologists and historians as the cradle of humanity.

Furthermore, I analyze how Glissant posits the post-slavery French Caribbean as a mirror to our current world in its totality. I will highlight how he concretely addresses in collaboration with other French Caribbean artists and political activists the socio-political interrelations between France and its DOM-TOMs⁹ in light of the 2009 General Strikes. I reconsider the dis/similarities between the living situation of the ancient migrant-nu and that of his or her descendant, the contemporary DOM-TOM dweller. What lessons can the latter draw from the experience of the former? How and why has Glissant’s socio-political vision of the DOM-TOM vis-à-vis the French Metropole changed over time, in

⁸ Glissant opposes the migrant-nu to the migrant-armé [armed migrant] from Euro-America and the migrant fondateur/familial [founding/domestic migrant] from Meso-America.

⁹ DOM-TOM stands for “Départements et Territoires d’Outre-Mer” [The French Overseas Departments and Territories] among which Glissant’s native Martinique is part of.

his career as a political activist from the first half of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century?

The third chapter, “France Disenfranchising,” complementarily extends the analysis of the historical impact of slavery and colonialism from the Caribbean islands to the inlands of the French Metropole. I examine how Glissant takes on the role of a political specialist in his assessment of how France politically, socially and economically copes with its invasion by immigrants in general and Francophone immigrants in particular. This direction leads to a more general reassessment of the current socio-political relations between “France and its other worlds” to use the subtitle of Elizabeth Mudimbe-Boyi’s *Empire Lost* (2009).

Deriving principally from Glissant’s and Chamoiseau’s *Quand les murs tombent*, I will analyze their criticism of Sarkozy’s Republican model, his instrumentalist politics of immigration and his creation of the “mur-ministère” [wall-ministry], the Ministère de l’immigration, de l’intégration, de l’identité nationale et du co-développement [Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity, and Co-development] in 2007. I examine closely the different perspectives of the French debate on national identity and Glissant’s poetic and politics of identity inspired from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s rhizome as a viable alternative to the French single-root identitarian model.

The final chapter, “Towards Imaginary Wholelands,” focuses on Glissant’s theoretical concept of the Tout-monde, a “contact zone,”¹⁰ in which the inhabitants of the West and the Rest coexist and “entertain differences without any assumed or imposed hierarchy.” I bring to the fore Glissant’s socio-political vision of the world in its totality by elaborating on his principal maxim “agis dans ton lieu, pense avec le monde” [act in

¹⁰ Cf. Marie Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*.

your place, think with the world] by “living in solitary and in solidarity” inscribed in most of his recent political writings.

First and foremost, I examine how he assesses the current situation of the world in general dominated by the West, which perpetuates the same colonial tactics on the Rest in more sophisticated fashions. Using the example of the DOM-TOMs, I will analyze his rejection of any universal, systemic and systematic models through his theoretical barometer of “mondialité.” I focus on two crucial domains, politics and economy, to show Glissant’s appeal for an equitable and dynamic world of relation, diversity and difference where the Self constantly exchange with the Other.

CHAPTER I:
REDEFINING THE BLACK EXPERIENCE IN EDOUARD GLISSANT'S
POETICS

The reassessment of the Black experience in the Americas has been one of the most salient questions in Caribbean fiction as a whole in both its Anglophone and Francophone regions. In Anglophone Caribbean literature and critical thought, Postcolonial and Diaspora critics in general have hailed Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy as two of the most popular champions of Black British Cultural Studies. In his reference book entitled *The Black Atlantic* (1993), Gilroy explores the Black heritage through the tripartite lens of music, slavery, and slave ship in his articulation of the well-known theoretical concept of the Black Atlantic, which is definable as a continual process of travel and exchange across the Atlantic that gives birth to a new “unfixed transnational Black identity.”

Likewise in French Caribbean fiction, the representation of the Black experience in the discursive interpretation of Africa and its traces has emerged as the leitmotiv of the paradigmatic theorization of the classical literary expressions of Negritude, Antillanité, and Créolité, movements that I will explore at length and in depth over the course of the analysis of this opening chapter. Glissant's Antillanité is far from being an exception to this literary rule all the more since Africa and its Black heritage have always played a preponderant role from his initial works such as *Soleil de la conscience* (1956) [The Suns

of Consciousness], and *La Lézarde, Le discours antillais* to his late works *Mémoires des esclavages*, and *L'intraitable beauté du monde*.

In this chapter, I will focus on Glissant's theorization of time, which is one of the three most fundamental paradigms of his whole poetics,¹¹ to demonstrate his representation of the Black experience in the Caribbean. I will analyze how he uses this fundamental poetic tool to actualize and express his political views on slavery and colonialism in general. In the first part of the chapter, "Glissant's History," I will discuss Glissant's poetic theorization of history in the Caribbean framework. I will present him as an atypical historian through his redefinition of Caribbean history or rather histories answering the following question: What is Glissant's sense of history and how does it demarcate from Western History? In the second part of the chapter, "Africa within the Literary Expressions," I will study the controversy over the representation of Africa through Glissant's conceptual avenue of Antillanité in comparison with the precedent and subsequent literary movements of Negritude and Créolité. In other words, I will look at how the Afro-Caribbean tradition is perceived in these aforementioned literary canons through a particular focus on the main function of Africa in the (re)definition of a Caribbean identity. And finally, in the last part of the chapter, "Rethinking Slavery Today," I will assess the actual dimension of the historical questions of slavery and colonialism in France and in the world. I will situate Glissant's perspective and prospective in light of the current debates over reparations and the Loi Taubira of 2001 in France during the presidential administrations of Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy.¹²

¹¹ The other two paradigms of Glissant's poetics are space and language.

¹² Jacques Chirac served for two terms 1995-2007, and Nicolas Sarkozy served for one term 2007-2012.

GLISSANT'S HISTORY

The analysis of the poetic theorization of history in Glissant's oeuvre necessitates the reexamination of the very author as a committed writer, theorist, and political activist for the Black cause in the world in general and in the Caribbean in particular. As early as the beginning of his career, Glissant participated in a great deal of movements and committees for the illustration and defense of the Black heritage in the Caribbean. Like the vast majority of prominent writers and theorists of the Black Diaspora such as Cheikh Anta Diop, Aimé Césaire, Alex Haley, Glissant ascribes himself the famous role of a historian and a "réveilleur de conscience" [consciousness awakener] to use Frantz Fanon's terminology to re-present and re-write the "false" historical accounts hitherto produced by the colonialists and colonizers in their colonial chronicle.

In a roundtable panel with Jacques Chevrier featuring Patrick Chamoiseau, Cheikh Hamidou Kane, Wole Soyinka, and Lothar Baier, a discussion under the umbrella theme "De l'esclavage au Tout-Monde" (1998) [From Slavery to the Tout-Monde], Glissant argues that the primal role of any writer from "the peoples defined as those without history" is to carry out the permanent and pertinent mission of a historian: "Je rappelle qu'un écrivain est quelqu'un qui extrait sa parole d'un terreau, qui est peut-être le terreau du passé, qui est le terreau à venir, qui est peut-être la parole d'un Dieu qu'il a écouté, qui est la voix d'un peuple qu'il a écouté" (57). [I remind everybody that a writer is someone who extracts his word from compost, which may be the compost of the past, that of the future, which is perhaps the word of a God to whom he listened, which is the voice of the people to which he listened.]

This stance is revived in his more recent works such as *Mémoires des esclavages* and *Philosophie de la Relation* (2009), in which he calls for this mission through a commemorative historical representation of important events and reunions of writers and activists across the Black Diaspora. For instance in *Philosophie de la Relation*, Glissant re-memorializes a crucial historical moment in 1956, the Congress of Black writers and artists at the Sorbonne. After praising the remarkable works of the Negritude bards, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and Léon Damas in the 1930s and also the great impact of the Harlem Renaissance represented by such writers as Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and William Dubois in the 1920s, Glissant stresses the catalytic function of the Congress in the framing of the Black diasporist's mission.

He specifically evokes the emergence of a “very new spirituality,” which enables a sort of unique diversity within the Black world. The Congress is indeed an unprecedented premise to upcoming decolonization movements in the 1960s. It favors the recognition of the valuable notion of “difference” between those he classifies as the writers and artists of the origins and those of the Diaspora. The “difference” which Glissant refers to does not have separationist implications; rather, it denotes a sort of richness that engenders an adaptation and adoption of a new “Diasporic diversity.” In other words, he argues that the Congress facilitates a communal combatting strategy under the horizontal mode of execution from the local to the global throughout the Black world in both Africa and the Americas.

Glissant's assessment of the memorable Congress, as I will argue in this chapter, does not give a fuller and more realistic picture of its impact on the policies that resulted from these reunions. Modeled on a vertical basis of diverse unity as opposed to Glissant's

horizontal mode of execution of unique diversity, the Negritude's approach has proven to be more appropriate in the recognition and valorization of the Black subject in a more unifying and collaborative way. It indeed served to counter the established policy of "divide and rule" by inciting an effective sense of urgency and solidarity whereby Africans and their descendants merged into a strong one body.

Moreover, the other problematic aspect in Glissant's evaluation is the over-exaggeration of the function of writers and artists in the accentuation of the decolonization process in the 1960s. While I agree with him that the latter played an important role in this process, I argue that the "tirailleurs sénégalais" [West African Colonial Army Troopers]¹³ had a much more significant impact. Having played a major role in the victories of the Allied Forces in general and France in particular during the two world wars, the Tirailleurs came back from the battlefields animated by a desire to break free their "Masters." This phenomenon led to heated debates over independence between the colonizers and the colonized at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s as detailed in De Gaulle's Brazzaville Speech on August 21 1958, in which he proposed to the African leadership two possibilities: independence or membership in the Community of the Metropole and its Overseas Territories.¹⁴

The rediscovery of these aforementioned historical events in both fictional and non-fictional works demonstrate the crucial dimension that Glissant attributes to history. Therefore before delving into the characteristics of the historical re-imagination of the Black experience in the French Caribbean, it is worth analyzing Glissant's poetic

¹³ See Myron Echenberg's *Colonial Conscripts*.

¹⁴ See De Gaulle's memorable threat to the "porteurs de pancartes" [Placard bearers] in Dakar on 28 September 1958: "Vous voulez l'indépendance, prenez la. Prenez-la pour le meilleur et pour le pire." [You want independence, take it. Take it for better or for worse.]

perspective on and of history. To better represent this perspective, he generally juxtaposes two predominantly different types of history: history as presented in the colonial chronicle and countering history from the colonized. These types of history are reminiscent of Paul Ricoeur's articulation of history on a national level in his book: *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (2003) [Memory, History, Forgetting], in which he divides history into two different discourses: patriotic discourse (a conquering mode of narration) versus historic narrative (detailed version of narration based on truth). Glissant's opts out from the former in favor of the latter in his enterprise of rewriting the history or rather the histories of the Caribbean.

In *Une nouvelle région du monde*, he develops these two contrastive representations of history. He calls for a truer narrative, which he labels "histoire du vécu" [history of life lived] and rejects the history of the colonial chronicle, which is adopted by those he calls "les historiens du modèle unique" [the historians of the single root model]: "Ils dirent que la fiction fondait l'art d'exprimer le monde et dirent qu'ils étaient les seuls à faire l'Histoire, ils se vantaient d'être les premiers à avoir le droit de dérouler des histoires, c'est-à-dire encore, ce récit" (37-38). [They said that fiction founded the art of expressing the world and that they were the only ones to make history. They boasted about being the first to have the right to roll out histories, that is to say this narrative.]

The aforementioned quotation exposes an umbrella of fundamental questions that have classically been at the crux of debates over the (in)existence and (ir)relevance of history in colonized lands. Following in the footsteps of predecessors like Césaire, Glissant refutes these arguments by the colonial administration with its well-known

policy of civilizing mission, which intended to make the subalterns believe that “their ancestors were the Gauls.” Therefore, the primal mission of the writer or rather the historian in the colonized and enslaved world in Africa and the Americas, as discussed in the introductory part, is to dismiss this erratic claim. Chinua Achebe’s *Hopes and Impediments* (1964), an essay in which he shuns the colonial chronicle in his definition of “the role of a writer in a new nation,” asserts the preexistence of African history and culture:

African peoples did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; [...] their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African peoples all but lost in the colonial period, and it is this dignity that they must now regain. The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect. The writer’s duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost. (7)

In a somewhat similar mode and tone, Glissant attacks or rather counterattacks the history classically traced by the colonists and colonizers in *Le discours antillais*. He refutes the classical enumerative example of Martinican history from Columbus in 1502 to 1975 with the advent of the Doctrine of Economic Assimilation.¹⁵ In his analysis of the concept of dispossession alongside the “landmarks of the chronological illusion,” Glissant finds the representation of the history of Martinique in the colonial chronicle as a simple and simplistic reduction: “Une fois ce tableau chronologique dressé, complété, tout reste à débrouiller de l’histoire martiniquaise. Tout reste à découvrir de l’histoire antillaise de la

¹⁵ See his landmarks in “Leurre chronologique” [The chronological illusion] in *Le discours antillais* 27.

Martinique” (27). [Once this chronicle table has been set up, the whole history remains to be unraveled. The whole Caribbean history of Martinique remains to be discovered (13).] He proposes a mission for rehabilitating this “illusory” chronological table, a glued past, through an adequate exhibition of the complex lives of the peoples before and after the invasion of the Caribbean archipelago.

Furthermore, to demonstrate the preexistence of a well-founded history, Glissant and other writers and activists of the Black Diaspora refute the colonial claim from the “fictionneurs” [fictional historians], which argues that history has to be written, a stance that makes a “tabula rasa” of the diverse heritage originally preserved in orality by the griot.¹⁶ In the African context, a reference example of the valuable role of the griot is Camara Laye’s *Le maître de la parole* (1978) [The Master of the Word], in which he sanctifies the role of the latter in the historiography of Soundjata, an important king of the Mande Empire. Another patent illustration is the historic Kurugan Fuga or the Mande Charter, which is inscribed in the representative reference of the intangible cultural list of UNESCO. This traditional oral text served as the constitution of the Mali Empire after the memorable battle of Krina in 1235, which legislated the power dynamics between the different clans of the Mandikan federation under one communal law.

In the Caribbean context as well, there is a panegyric valorization of the oral traditions in the reestablishment of the Creole histories by Glissant himself and the Creolists in particular. In *Eloge de la Créolité* (1989) [In Praise of Creoleness], Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé, and Raphaël Confiant stress the centrality of orality as one of the landmarks of Creole identity:

¹⁶ See Hale’s *Griots* in which he portrays griots as “masters of words and music” in West African cultures.

Véritable galaxie en formation autour de la langue créole comme noyau, la Créolité connaît encore aujourd'hui un mode privilégié: l'oralité. Pourvoyeuse de contes, proverbes, "titim", comptines, chansons etc., l'oralité est notre intelligence, elle est notre lecture de ce monde, le tâtonnement, aveugle encore, de notre complexité. (34)

A real galaxy with the Creole language as its core, Creoleness, has, still today its privileged mode: orality. Provider of tales, proverbs, "titim", nursery rhymes, songs etc., orality is our intelligence; it is our reading of this world, the experimentation, still blind, of our complexity. (95)

In Glissant's rediscovery of the "hidden history" in his oeuvre, there is indeed a sense of precedence and attachment to the social environment of the different peoples of the Caribbean through the power of orality. In *Essai sur une mesure du monde au XX^e siècle* (2002) [Essay on a Measurement of the World in the 20th Century], Romuald Foukoua analyzes how Glissant turns slavery into a "fait social total" (total social occurrence), which imposes itself as a "hyperconscience sociale" (174-175) [social hyperconsciousness] and leaves indelible marks on the enslaved communities. Glissant exposes in detail this social phenomenon in *Mémoires des esclavages* and invites the involved parties, the victimizers and the victimized to reassess the inter-complexities produced within the social interactions of these protagonists.

Glissant's rehabilitation of the hidden history of slavery as a "total social occurrence," a "life lived" by the migrant-nu clashes to a certain extent with Frantz Fanon's perception of the treatment of the Black experience, be it in the Caribbean or in Africa. In *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952) [Black Skin, White Masks], Fanon rejects

the different propositions of the Black advocates in their committed adventure to revive the historical and historic events in general and slavery in particular. Instead, he psychologically urges the different protagonists to go beyond the burdening past, namely the respective superiority of the victimizers and the inferiority of the victimized:

Je ne suis pas prisonnier de l'Histoire. Je ne dois pas y chercher le sens de ma destinée. Je dois me rappeler à tout instant que le véritable saut consiste à introduire l'invention dans l'existence. Dans le monde où je m'achemine, je me crée interminablement. (186)

I am not a prisoner of History. I must not have to look for the meaning of my destiny in that direction. I must remind myself that the real leap consists of introducing invention into life. In the world I am heading for, I am endlessly creating myself. (204)

Fanon's approach to this question of the history rehabilitation of the Black experience is not suggestive of a total silence on these historic moments of slavery and colonialism. He condemns in practice and theory the latter but argues that the perspective proposed by the vast majority of the defenders of the Black cause, such as the Negritude bards for instance, creates more problems than solutions. He favors a more futurist vision directed towards what he calls the "universalité de la condition humaine" [universality of human condition], which is free from any separationist principles. As suggested in the quotation, Fanon challenges the victimized more than the victimizers in the consideration of the past events, because the former are easily subject to reproducing the alienating tactics of the latter.

In this regard, it is arguable that Glissant follows somehow in the footsteps of Fanon in spite of his insistence on the representation of the history of slavery as a

preponderant role in his works. His reinterpretation does not imprison the minds of the different protagonists whom he engages in a collaborative Fanonian fashion as illustrated in *Mémoires des esclavages*, which I will analyze in the last part of the chapter on the actual dimension of the question of slavery in light of the debates over reparations and the Loi Taubira.

In his rehabilitation adventure and representation of the hidden history, Glissant gives a more adequate picture of history that is in phase with the realities of the Caribbean archipelago. It implies a refutation of any form of hegemonic or universal history concentrated on the grandiose achievements of “extraordinary people” to the detriment of the simple and rich lives of the “ordinary people.” This approach clashes not only with that of the Western representation of history but also with that of Glissant’s predecessors like Césaire. In his defensive representation of the Black experience in the Caribbean, Césaire adopts the “conquering perspective” in his narrative of the history of Haiti as he concentrates it on the “extraordinary” figure of Toussaint Louverture in *Toussaint Louverture et le problème colonial* (1961) [Toussaint Louverture and the Colonial Problem]:

Dans l’histoire et dans le domaine des droits de l’homme, [Toussaint Louverture] fut pour le compte des nègres, l’opérateur et l’intercesseur. Cela lui assigne sa place, sa vraie place. Le combat de Toussaint Louverture fut [...] le combat pour la *reconnaissance* de l’homme et c’est pourquoi il s’inscrit et inscrit la révolte des esclaves noirs de Saint-Domingue dans l’histoire de la civilisation universelle. (344)

In history and in the domain of Human Rights, he [Toussaint Louverture] was for the Blacks: the operator and the intercessor. This fact gives him his due, his real due. Toussaint Louverture's combat was [...] the combat for the *recognition* of the human being and this is why he inscribes himself and inscribes the revolt of the black slaves of Saint Domingue in the history of universal civilization.

Glissant's alternative to this classical retelling of history by both the colonial chronicle and their "imitators" promotes a focus on the notion of the "événementiel" to the detriment of the chronological. In other words, he rejects the simplistic reduction of history to a series of dates rather than the timely events and places that participate in the shaping of the social lives of the different peoples whether "extraordinary" or "ordinary." In his novel *Mahogany* (1987), for example, he denounces: "[L]a date ne convient pas aux tourments, intitule de jeudifier ou de dimancher la trace écrite ni même d'avancer le quantième. Il est un que j'abandonne c'est la datation (62). [[D]ates do not fully expose upheavals, it is pointless to thursdayify or sundayify written trace not even to mention the numerical order. The only thing that I abandon is dating.]

In his replacement of the chronological table by that of the eventful, Glissant rejects the linearity of time. In his contribution to the manifesto *Pour une littérature-monde*, "Solitaire et solidaire: Entretien avec Edouard Glissant," [In Solidarity and Solitary: Interview with Edouard Glissant] Glissant dismisses this linear approach: "Il n'y a non pas une linéarité temporelle dans la mémoire historique du colonisé mais une espèce de chaos dans lequel il tombe et coule; c'est pourquoi je dis toujours que nous dévalons les roches du temps " (49). [There is not at all a temporal linearity in the

historical memory of the colonized but rather a sort of chaos in which he falls and flows; that is the reason why I always say that we hurdle down the rocks of time.] This rejection of linear time, which characterizes Western time as displayed in the colonial chronicle, has an African and Diasporic dimension. African time is classically defined as circular,¹⁷ a conception deeply rooted in a common African belief that teaches that “the dead are not dead,” as well expressed in Birago Diop’s “Le souffle des Ancêtres” [The Ancestors’ Spirits] in *Leurres et Lueurs* (1960) [Lures and Glimmers].

The adaption and adaptation of the circular interpretation of time is a motif that enables Glissant to take into account the histories of the different peoples in the Americas, replacing History with a “tresse d’histoires” [a braid of histories] to use the Creolists’ denomination in their *Eloge de la Créolité* (26). In his *Philosophie de la Relation*, Glissant remarks, “Là où les histoires des peuples se rencontrent finit l’histoire avec grand H (124). [At the very place where histories of peoples meet ends history with capital H.]

Since the colonial chronicle generally abbreviates most of the diverse histories, the Caribbean writer/historian must revive them through the paradigmatic avenue of presence/absence. This avenue is paved through the notion of hidden or lost history developed earlier, a form of history defined by Glissant as “une histoire qui se dit sans se dire tout en se disant” (*Mémoires des esclavages* 56) [a history which tells itself without telling itself]. This approach to hidden/lost history echoes well Derek Walcott’s concept of imagined history in “The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?” (1974):

¹⁷ Time is represented in Yoruba mythology tradition as “a snake eating its own tail.”

In the Caribbean history is irrelevant, not because it is not being created, or because it was sordid but because it has never mattered, what has mattered is the loss of history, the amnesia of races, what has become necessary is imagination, imagination as necessity, as invention. (6)

In his imagination of the series of untold plural histories left stranded by the colonial table, Glissant elevates the migrant-nu in his endeavor to re-create himself out of nothing and uncertainty in his new surroundings. This enterprise transforms the history of the Caribbean into a transversal adventure that continuously constitutes itself in time and space. In *Mémoires des esclavages*, in which he develops this notion of transversal history, he admits that this new type of history is under continuous construction: “[L]es assembléments (de cette histoire) inédits restent encore à découvrir” (34). [The unprecedented assembling components (of this history) remain to be discovered.]

Glissant’s transversal history is in itself problematic all the more because it is subject to a multitude of revisions since things are in constant motion and in rediscovery. The main challenge is the proportionate adequateness of the “histoire du vécu” [history as life lived] of both the extraordinary people and the ordinary ones in the Caribbean context. I argue that his recent concept of transversal history is another motif used by Glissant to be in phase with an umbrella of questions turning around his concept of the Tout-monde. He therefore appears overambitious because he leaves an umbrella of unanswered questions revolving around the untold stories or rather histories of the colonized world for a more global perspective on history. In other words, he moves from the global to the particular to a certain extent and makes the whole enterprise more complex. His main criticism of his predecessors and the colonial historians is the

oversimplification or reduction of the rich history but the same criticism may apply to him because he makes the history of the archipelago over complex and quite impossible to define. This over complexity is in fact apparent in his narrative of the Afro-Caribbean tradition through his Antillanité, a literary expression that complements and complicates Negritude and Créolité.

AFRICA WITHIN THE LITERARY EXPRESSIONS

Glissant's poetic theorization of history through the lens of history as life lived, hidden or lost history, and transversal history serves as an art of preparation that enables him to build a historic narrative that evaluates the (inter)connections between Africa and the Caribbean through his literary expression of Antillanité. In order to comprehend better the latter, I will compare it with the respective precedent and subsequent expressions to his own, namely Negritude and Créolité. The first literary paradigm, Negritude, appeared in the 1930s in Paris with the special encounter of leaders of the Black Diaspora from Africa to the Americas. It is defined as an anticolonial and anti-assimilationist movement through the rehabilitation of the Black Persona in general. In their redefinition of Caribbean identity, Césaire and Damas reestablish the umbilical cord between Africa and the Caribbean. Glissant's concept of Antillanité appeared in the 1960s out of a break with Negritude, which he views as a wrongfully inadequate philosophy to Caribbean identity. It embraces the multi-racial culture of Caribbean peoples and declares their cultures separate yet integrally part of those of Africa and Europe. Unlike the Negritudinists, the Creolists, in their *Eloge de la Créolité*, give less precedence to Africa and its traces in their theorization of a new Caribbean cultural identity. Chamoiseau, Bernabé, and Confiant posit a Creole identity as a common or

communal denominator that reflects the pluralistic complexities and realities of an archipelago, whose inhabitants originate from different places around the globe: Africa, Asia, and Europe.

However, it is important to note that these three main literary expressions are not all the more exhaustive or exclusive avenues of Caribbean thought because iconographic figures like Maryse Condé do not see themselves as part of these “imprisoning” categorizations. In “Négritude Césairienne, négritude Senghorienne” [Cesaire’s Negritude, Senghor’s Negritude], for example, Condé criticizes the dialectics proposed by the Negritude bards around the Black persona in reference and opposition to the Whites: “La négritude prend pour postulat de base un mensonge, le pire mensonge de la colonisation, celui de l’existence d’un être inférieur fait pour les fonctions subalternes” (414). [Negritude takes as premise a lie, the worst lie of colonialization, which is the existence of an inferior, which is made for subaltern functions.] In the same vein, she demarcates herself from the theoretical problematization of language as a determinant landmark in Caribbean literary thought by Glissant and the Creolists. In her interview with Marie-Agnès Sourieau entitled “De l’identité culturelle” (1999) [Of Cultural Identity], she responds:

Je pense que je suis un être complexe de par ma situation de colonisée, de par une série d’influences qui font ce que je suis, et il faut me laisser libre d’exprimer les facettes. Qu’on ne vienne pas me dire que le créole est ma langue maternelle. Qu’on ne vienne pas me dire que le français est une langue de colonisation. (1094)

I think that I am a complex being because of my situation as a colonized being, and of a series of influences that shape me, and I must be free to express the facets. Let not someone come and tell me that Creole is my mother tongue. Let not someone tell me that French is a language of colonialization.

Before delving into the debates over the representation of Africa through the aforementioned literary expressions, it is methodically important to pause and demonstrate how the Afro-Caribbean tradition is examined in some disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. In *Refashioning Futures* (1993), David Scott distinguishably summarizes two main directions in the articulation of the representation of Africa and slavery in the Americas: the verificationist/essentialist and the anti-essentialist approaches. While the former defends that the African traces are indelible, the latter argues that the “presence of Africa in the Caribbean is too attenuated to be discernible” (109). Even though Scott’s argumentative delimitation principally focuses on the Anglophone Caribbean, it is indeed applicable to a certain extent to the French Caribbean in general and in the aforementioned literary expressions in particular.

On his assessment of the Afro-Caribbean tradition, Gilroy lays out the specificities of each approach in clearer terms in his article “It Ain’t Where You Are from, It’s Where You’re At...The Dialectics of Diasporic Identification (1991):” “The essentialist view comes in gender specific forms but has often been characterized by a brute pan-Africanism that, in Britain at least, is politically inert” (5). On the contrary, the anti-essential approach recognizes a sense of pluralism where there exists diversity and diversion among all the members of that diasporic bubble: “This perspective currently

confronts a pluralistic position, which affirms blackness as an open signifier and seeks to celebrate complex representation of black” (5).

In light of these considerations by both Scott and Gilroy and also the presentations of the three main expressions introduced above, it appears plausible to assimilate the Negritude approach to an essentialist avenue and that of the Creolists to an anti-essentialist one. Glissant’s is situated in both approaches as he adopts and adapts an “in-between” perspective that bridges both discourses as it appears in his “point d’intrication” [the moment of entanglement], a historic moment of “impermanence, instability and hybridity” where all cultures of the Caribbean come into being. Glissant projects this moment of entanglement as a determining stage in the historic life of the migrant-nu in Neo-America.

Glissant uses this decisive moment as a motif to demarcate himself from the narrative of origins proponed by Negritude bards who realistically and/or imaginatively transports the Caribbean to motherland Africa as exemplified in Césaire’s *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1955) [Discourse on Colonialism] and his *Cahier de retour au pays natal* (1939) [Notebook of a return to the Native Land]. In his poem *Ferrements* (1960) [Iron Chains], Césaire claims:

Je vois l’Afrique multiple et une	I can see Africa multiple and one
Verticale dans la tumultueuse péripétie	Vertical in the turbulent adventure
Et je redis : Hoo mère !	And I say again: Oh mum
Et je lève ma force	And I lift my strength
Inclinant ma face	Bowing my face
Oh ma terre!	Oh motherland!

Another example from a different genre that promotes a return and recourse to Africa in Caribbean fiction is Joseph Zobel’s novel *La rue-Cases-Nègres* (1950) [Black

Shack Alley]. In his classical bildungsroman that relates the lives of Blacks in the plantations in 1930s Martinique under the yoke of the French békés,¹⁸ the writer weaves a telling narrative through the complicity of the narrator, José Hassam and a main protagonist Médouze. Performing the central role of the conteur [storyteller], the latter revives and reconnects José with his distant yet indistinct African sphere during their nocturnal titims (short stories). Despite his young age, José becomes gradually immersed in African mythology as demonstrated after the death of his “Black Christ” when he convincingly revives the African belief about the subtle presence of the dead among the living. While almost everybody else in the neighborhood believes in the death of Médouze, José imaginatively transports him to the real native land, the Western part of Africa (55).

This narrative of origins that envisions displacing realistically or imaginatively the Caribbean to Africa has been under scrutiny by the post-Négritude writers and theorists such as Glissant and particularly the Creolist Confiant, who has devoted an entire book on the philosophy behind the Négritude movement, *Aimé Césaire ou une traversée paradoxale du siècle* (1993) [Aimé Césaire or a Paradoxical Journey through the Century]. While paying tribute to Césaire for his preponderant role in the shaping and recognition of Caribbean fiction and his combat for the emergence of an anti-colonial consciousness, Glissant and the Creolists dismantle the Négritude discourse of origins because of its principal “logic of exteriority,” which relegates the Caribbean question to a peripheral stance. In *Eloge de la Créolité*, the Creolists rebuke their predecessors for transporting too far the questions directly related to the inner realities of the archipelago dwellers as they view Africa as an impossible, illusory, and mythic mother. Similarly,

¹⁸ Caribbean-born Whites, descendants of planters.

Glissant argues in *Le discours antillais* how the Negritude's philosophy of Césaire is out of touch in the Caribbean context, mocking his well-known *Cahier de retour au pays natal* for its accentuated popularity in Senegal over Martinique. He associates the return to the native land to Africa as a sort of “variantes camouflées ou sublimées du Retour à l’Afrique” (35) [camouflaged or sublimated variations of the return to Africa (24)].

Confiant's criticism of the Negritude philosophy is not limited to its logic of exteriority. He rejects how Césaire establishes a tension between the African Negro and the Caribbean Negro, the former appearing as a “bourreau” [executioner] and the latter as a “VICTIME ABSOLUE”(134) [ABSOLUTE VICTIM], creating therefore a sort of “complexe de déficit d’africanité” [complex of deficiency of Africanity.] His refutation of this type of narrative of African origins originates also from his view on slavery. In the same chapter, “Le ressourcement dans l’Afrique-mère” [“Deep-rootedness in Mother-Africa”], Confiant accuses the “Original Negro” for his complicity in the enslavement and victimization of the “New Negro” whom he defends as follows: “Il est, martelons-le, la victime absolue. Il n’est nullement un quelconque enfant prodigue, parti de son propre gré à la découverte du vaste monde. Il est à la fois le razzîé (par L’Européen) et le mal défendu/vendu (par l’Africain)” (135). [He is, let us say it, the absolute victim. He is not at all a prodigal son, who has left willingly to the discovery of the world. He is the raided by (the European), and the undefended/the sold (by the African).]

In contrast, Glissant's narrative of origins places itself between these two discourses of recognition and disavowal of the Africanness of the Caribbean without indulging in the debate over the complicity of the African Negro underscored by Confiant. In other words, he accommodates and bridges both discourses within the

Caribbean soil by resituating the genesis of the migrant-nu within the archipelagic realms: “[L]a véritable Genèse des peuples des Caraïbes, c’est le ventre du bateau négrier et c’est l’antre de la plantation” (*Introduction à une poétique du Divers* 35). [[T]he real Genesis of the Caribbean people, is the belly of the slave ship, and the center of the plantation.]

Unlike his predecessors whose preoccupation with the two spaces (the boat and the plantation) is to revivify the harsh experiences of Blacks during the Atlantic crossing, Glissant intends to resuscitate Caribbean people and re-anchor their history in the archipelago as elucidated by the telling words “ventre” and “antre” [belly and lair]. This anchorage of the origins within the new surroundings enables the author to make his narrative more relatable to the actual situation of the Caribbean. Paul Gilroy tellingly expresses this vision in his aforementioned article “It Ain’t Where You Are From, It Is Where You Are At...” in which he urges the African Diaspora to live and build their lives within their actual surroundings whether in the West or the Rest.

Besides, Glissant’s position on these traumatic past experiences (slavery and colonialism) is different from that of his predecessors. Unlike Césaire whose *Discours sur le colonialisme* is a total uncompromising indictment¹⁹ of a past imposed on the Caribbean, Glissant acknowledges in a rather subtle and nuanced manner that colonialism and slavery have developed some “potential.” In one of his earliest articles entitled “Le Romancier noir et son peuple” (1957) [The Black Novelist and his People], he denounces the biased portrayal of the Caribbean past by his predecessors: “Il semble qu’un roman qui se donne pour révéler une réalité doit aborder cette réalité de tous les côtés à la fois,

¹⁹ Cf. his well-known equation: colonisation=chosification [colonialization=thingification].

en ce qu'elle a de positif et de négatif" (29). [It seems that a novel that aims at revealing a reality must analyze this reality from all angles including its positive and negative aspects.] In the chapter on the consequences of the dispossession of the migrant-nu after the Atlantic crossing in *Le discours antillais*, he mentions that the slave trade has favored

pas seulement agonie et perdition mais l'occasion aussi d'affirmer un ensemble estimable de propriétés. Celle par exemple de fréquenter "les valeurs" non pas comme absolu de référence mais comme modes agissants d'une Relation. (Le renoncement aux pures valeurs d'origine ouvre sur un sens inédit de la mise en rapports). (29-30)

not just distress and loss but also a considerable set of possibilities. For instance, the possibility of dealing with "values" no longer in absolute terms but as active agents of synthesis. (The abandonment of pure original values allows for an unprecedented potential for contact). (16)

Glissant views the imposed past as a sort of "mal nécessaire" [necessary evil] because it opens new vistas with the emergence of hybrid cultures not just in the Caribbean but throughout the world, which participates in the emergence of the Caribbean as an exceptional location of culture as I will analyze in the second chapter of this dissertation, "The Archipelagic Exception."

However this positive argument about slavery as a "necessary evil" is far from stating that Glissant is celebratory in his treatment of the traumatic past imposed on his people. Instead, as mentioned in the first part of this chapter, he condemns slavery and colonialism in his writings and also in his personal career as a devout political activist as

early as 1959 as a co-founder of the “Front Antillo-guyanais pour l’autonomie”²⁰ [Guyanese Antillean Front for Autonomy], which fought for the decolonization of the entire French overseas departments. His novel, *Le quatrième siècle* (1964) [The Fourth Century], is illustrative in this respect. In the latter, he reviews four centuries of slavery (slaves of the plantations and the maroons) in his native Martinique, recounting condemningly the hard struggles of the maroons in their reclamation of their lands from the slave-masters. Likewise, in *Mémoires des esclavages*, he lauds the abolitionists (Abraham Lincoln, Victor Scholercher) and martyrs of slavery from human beings to sites and deportation ports.

Glissant features the slave ship as an ambivalent signifier that symbolizes both parts of a “same coin,” a place of sufferance and hardship but also a womb that gives birth to new peoples. He denominates the sailing boat as “une barque ouverte”²¹ [open boat] despite its imprisoning nature, showing thus the complete nature of the slave trade in its different facets. In *Le discours antillais*, he fustigates the silence of the classical historians on certain aspects of slavery:

L’opération de la Traite (sur laquelle la pensée occidentale, l’étudiant pourtant comme phénomène historique, fera si constamment silence en tant que signe de la relation) oblige la population ainsi traitée à mettre en question toute ambition d’un universel généralisant. (28)

The nature of the slave trade forces the populations subjected to it to question in several ways any attempt at universal generalization. Western

²⁰ Glissant and Paul Nègre, a writer and activist from Guadeloupe, created this separatist Front. Accused of a breach of national security, they were banned from the French Caribbean overseas departments from 1961-1965.

²¹ See Glissant’s chapter bearing the same name in *Poétique de la Relation* (23-34).

thought, although studying it as a historical phenomenon, persists in remaining silent about the potential of the slave trade for the process of creolization. (14)

In order to better expose the “happenings” in the open boat, it is important to stress the preponderance of Glissant’s most crucial landmark in his re-imagination of a Caribbean history or rather histories, which is the “point d’intrication” [moment of entanglement]. Since he argues that this moment is fundamentally characteristic in the definition of a complete Caribbean identity, it is crucial to analyze the dis/similarities between his approach and that of the Creolists in the description and definition of the realities of the Caribbean in its entirety.

In the prologue of *Eloge de la Créolité*, the Creolists deny any specific classification into the different peoples of the Caribbean: “Ni Européens, ni Africains, ni Asiatiques, nous nous proclamons Créoles” (13). [Neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians, we proclaim ourselves Creoles (75).] Following this identitarian proclamation, they elaborate on the notion of an “attitude intérieure” [interior vision] by subtly exposing the limitations of preexisting theories of identity including Glissant’s. They envision their poetics in the following way: “Elles (leurs paroles) ne s’adressent pas aux seuls écrivains, mais à tout concepteur de notre espace [...] dans quelque discipline que ce soit, en quête douloureuse d’une pensée plus fertile, d’une expression plus juste, d’une esthétique plus vraie” (13). [They (their words) are not merely addressed to the writers, but to any person of ideas who conceives our space [...] in any discipline whatsoever, who is in the painful quest for a more fertile thought, for a more precise expression, for a truer art (75).]

Even though, the Creolists do not relate in detail the historical process of creolization of the Caribbean, they are in line with Glissant on the pluralistic structure of the narrative of origins of the Caribbean since they characterize the History of the Caribbean as a “braid of histories.” In other words, Glissant and his successors celebrate the diversity of Caribbean society brought into being by many shared histories. However, Glissant refrains from embracing the Creolists’ project of reducing these diverse communities into one common Creole denomination, which is therefore another form of essentialism.

I argue that the Creolist approach or rather promotion of a Creole uniqueness has therefore the potential of not just relegating the African heritage to a peripheral position but also of annihilating the Black experience in the Caribbean. This experience is merged into a national(istic) Creole experience that starts first and foremost within each nation of the Caribbean before expanding to the other regions of the Caribbean, which is the ultimate phase of the cycle: “[L]acquisition d’une éventuelle souveraineté mono-insulaire ne saurait être qu’une étape (que nous souhaiterions la plus brève possible) sur la route d’une fédération ou d’une confédération caraïbe” (58). [[T]he acquisition of an eventual mono-insulary sovereignty will be but a stage (a brief one, we hope) in the process toward a Caribbean federation or confederation (116).] The very federation is conceptualized through their concept of “double solidarity,” which consists of a “geographical solidarity” within the Caribbean archipelago and a “Creole solidarity” with all the Creoles around the world. This approach is exclusive because the larger part of

Africa is absent. The only parts of Africa included in their conceptual diagram in this “Creole solidarity” are Cape Verde, Mauritius, and the Seychelles.²²

Glissant takes a different route, which starts from the general to the particular, through a broader poetics of relation, fostering thus an “attitude of collective release.” In *Le discours antillais* he states: “On n’est pas martiniquais à force de se vouloir antillais: on devient réellement antillais à force de se vouloir martiniquais” (424). [One is not a Martinican because of wanting to become Caribbean. Rather one is really Caribbean because of wanting to become Martinican (224).] Glissant’s relational scope is all the wider as it expands not just to the Caribbean, the Americas but also to the whole world, his Tout-monde.

To better comprehend Glissant’s notion of Antillanité in contrast to Negritude in the representation of the Black experience, it is crucial to develop his notion of detour, which is opposite to the famous paradigm, proponed by the adepts of Negritude: retour. In an interview with Francois Noudelmann²³ conducted by Tanella Boni entitled “Mondialité de Glissant” (2012) [The Globality of Glissant], Noudelmann defines both terms as follows: “Le Retour est l’obsession de l’Un [universalisme]. Revenir, c’est consacrer la permanence de la non-Relation” [Return is the obsession with the One [universalism]. Returning is the acceptance of the permanence of non-Relation]. Contrastively, “le Détour n’est ruse profitable que si le Retour le féconde: non pas retour au rêve d’origine, l’Un immobile de l’Etre, mais retour au point d’intrication, dont on s’était détourné par force” [Detour is a profitable strategy if only Return fertilizes it: not to the return to the dream of the origins, to the immobile One of the Being, but to the

²² Cf. his conceptual diagram presented in *Eloge de la créolité* (33).

²³ Director of the Annual Seminar at the Institut Tout-Monde in partnership with Université Paris VIII.

point of entanglement, from which we had turned away]. The detour strategy, which is focused on the moment of entanglement, a special area and era of interrogation and integration, is an alternative that facilitates the decolonization of the Caribbean's mind. It is the main moment when the archipelagic space becomes an exceptional "cradle to identities" as I will explore in the second chapter, the "Archipelagic Exception," in which I will elucidate the consequences or rather the resulting lessons from the archipelago's (un)burdening past.

Glissant's paradigmatic notion of detour is well explained in his opposing description of the different worlds inhabited by the different protagonists of the Caribbean past, the slaves and their masters. While the world of the former is governed by the encompassing principle of solidarity, the latter's is incarcerated in his universe of solitude, nullifying any other being:

L'enjeu de toute émancipation est en effet d'abord la liberté du mélange, du métissage, de la créolisation, que le raciste et l'esclavagiste repoussent avec acharnement. Vaincre l'esclavage, c'est aussi comprendre cette nature et cette fonction des créolisations, et que l'univers des esclavagistes est celui de la solitude enragée de soi. (*Mémoires des esclavages* 42-3).

The stake of any emancipation is indeed first and foremost freedom of mixing, metissage, and creolization that the racist and the slave master reject relentlessly. Overcoming slavery means also understanding this nature and the function of creolizations and that the universe of the slave masters is that of proper enraged solitude.

This world of solitude appears in sharp contrast with the socially oriented environment of the slaves, a form of solidarity that consists in seeing oneself through and in the other as illustrated by the common belief in the Caribbean context where “the other is always listening.”

Furthermore, he defines the notion of detour through the sense of solidarity in practical terms. In *Les entretiens de Baton Rouge*, he develops the notion of “pratique du detour” [practice of detour] using the examples of the iconographic contributions of Caribbean Black activists in the (de)colonized world: “Il est étonnant comment les intellectuels (je ne parle pas seulement des poètes) se sont impliqués et intéressés aux problèmes chez ailleurs” (106). [It is amazing how intellectuals (I am not just talking about poets) got engaged and interested in problems from elsewhere.] Among these figures, he lauds the influences of the Jamaican Marcus Garvey on the cause of Black Americans, the Martinican Frantz Fanon on the Algerian cause, the Trinidadian Georges Pandore on the Ghanaian cause, and the Martinican Aimé Césaire on the project of the return to African authenticity through Negritude.

Glissant’s “practice of detour” is problematic as it appears at variance with his early criticism of the philosophy of Negritude in his reference manifesto, *Le discours antillais*. His laudatory comments on the contribution of Césaire to the Black world, for instance, are apparently irreconcilable to the latter’s marginalization of the Caribbean question. But, these seemingly two opposite positions on the legacy of Césaire and Glissant’s other predecessors including Fanon are discernable on poetical terms.

Throughout his work, Glissant weaves the common and communal poetic thread of the notion of “shared elsewhere” where people’s work on the local has an impact on

the total or global. Likewise, on political grounds, Glissant participated on a great deal of roundtables and debates on questions related to his concept of “Tout-monde,” through which he builds on the works of his predecessors such as Césaire and particularly Fanon. In other words, he makes use of “his practice of detour” in his treatment of questions globally related to the Black world. In this regard, Lilyan Kesteloot’s assimilation of Glissant’s vision of Antillanité to “négritude militante” [militant negritude] in *Anthologie négro-africaine* (1981) [Negro-African Anthology] is plausible even though that it is mainly applicable to Glissant’s most recent works where there is an obvious political militancy and collaboration with writers and activists from the Black Diaspora in general.

In 1998, Glissant worked with Chamoiseau and Wole Soyinka on the “Déclaration sur la traite négrière et l’esclavage” [Declaration on Slave Trade and Slavery], which can be viewed as a prelude to the memorable Loi Taubira. In their declaration, a severe indictment of Slavery in a reference text highlighted by an anaphoric refrain of “nous rappelons” [We remind], Glissant, Chamoiseau, and Soyinka urge the Western leadership to recognize Slave trade and Slavery as a Crime against humankind: “Nommons la Traite négrière et l’esclavage perpétrées dans les Amériques et l’Océan Indien: CRIMES CONTRE L’HUMANITÉ” [Let’s call the slave trade and slavery perpetuated in the Americas and in the Indian Ocean CRIMES AGAINST HUMANKIND.]

On a fairly similar agenda, Glissant collaborated with Saleh Trabelsi and Abdelhamid Largueche in 2009 at the Colloquium of Tozeur, Tunisia. The Declaration of Tozeur dealt with the overshadowed question of the slavery of Blacks in the Arab world and its abolition in 1846 in Tunisia. In both cases, Glissant practically rehabilitates the

heritage of his predecessors on issues that are more than resonating in both the worlds of the former slaves and their masters. The Institute Tout-monde initiated by Edouard Glissant in 2006 with the support of the Regional Council of Ile de France and the Ministry of Overseas of France has a similar direction, as it regularly organizes conferences, seminars, and colloquia on these aforementioned issues.

RETHINKING SLAVERY TODAY

In order to have a more complete picture of the main question of the Black experience in the Caribbean through Glissant's oeuvre, after the exploration of his poetic and political notion of history and his paradigmatic vision of Antillanité, it is worth analyzing the question of Slavery as a "shared past" in both the West and the Rest, in light of the Loi Taubira in France under the administrations of Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy. The question is all the more preponderant and relevant because Glissant develops an entire book, *Mémoires des esclavages*, to demonstrate why and how the "delicate" question of slavery is a moral obligation of "cognition" and "recognition" to be addressed openly and in practical terms.

In his different versions of *Mémoires des esclavages*, Glissant criticizes the political leadership in general for marginalizing the question of slavery, which is according to Christiane Taubira, the pioneer of the Law that bears her last name, and the current Minister of Justice of France, "[une] histoire, esclave de l'actualité" (*Egalité pour les exclus* 14) [a history, slave of current events]. In the high school version, Glissant raises awareness about this "neglected history" through a richer selection of diverse historical documents on slavery, from biographies of Victor Schoelcher and Abbé

Gregory, to the different articles of the Code noir and a special background history of the Loi Taubira.

In his foreword note to Glissant's *Mémoires des esclavages*, Dominique de Villepin²⁴ acknowledges the importance of the questions raised by Glissant and stresses the mission statement of the latter's book as follows:

Poser les jalons de cette réflexion, préciser les contours du futur centre national consacré à la traite, l'esclavage et à ses abolitions, voilà la mission qu'a acceptée Edouard Glissant. Qui mieux que lui pouvait assumer une tâche exigeant autant de lucidité et de générosité. (9-10)

Laying the foundation for this reflection, specifying the groundings of the future national center dedicated to slave trade, slavery and its abolitions, that is the mission accepted by Edouard Glissant. Who is a better choice than him to take on this task, which requires as much lucidity and generosity as possible.

As mentioned in the early part of this chapter, Glissant seizes the "événementiel" to deal with important issues in a more direct and directing language, subtly merging the poetical and the political. In the case of slavery and slave trade as enumerated by Villepin, Glissant molds an encompassing discourse addressed to traditionally separate worlds of the victimized and the victimizers in an engaging fashion. In other words, he analyzes the latter's relationship of co-presence and coexistence in a sort of Pratt's "contact zone." In *Mémoires des esclavages*, Glissant defines his audience in clear-cut terms:

²⁴ Former Prime Minister of France 2005-2007, Minister of Foreign Affairs 2002-2004, and Minister of Interior 2004-2005.

La question des esclavages tient toute à ces considérations, du moins la question de leur évocation et de la commémoration des libérations qui ont suivi. La suite de nos réflexions montre que l'unanimité de tous, Mauriciens, Seychellois et Réunionnais, Caribéens et Américains et Français et Européens, pas seulement souhaitable comme nous le disions au début de cet exposé, est indispensable. (175)

The question of slaveries takes fully into account these considerations, at least the question of the evocation and commemoration of its liberties that followed. The continuation of our reflections demonstrates that the unanimity of all, Mauritians, Seychellois, Reunionese, Caribbean, and Americans, and French, and Europeans, not only wishful as we said at the beginning of this presentation, is indispensable.

Over the course of his argumentation, Glissant demonstrates that unanimity is a determining approach in the consideration of the shared past of all nations involved in the historic slave trade. He urges people categorized or categorizing themselves into “nationaux de souche” [people of national descent] and “descendants d’esclaves” [people of slavery descent] to adopt a different attitude and to free themselves from these denominations.

Glissant’s approach or rather his attitude of “self-surpassing” vis-à-vis the treatment of the question of slave trade is difficult to achieve given the realities on the ground manifested in the doubtful will of the political leadership and the level of interest and education of both categorized groups. Despite of the repetitive claims of being a “réveilleur de conscience” in synchrony with “the will of the people,” it appears clearly

that Glissant's discourse is an elitist one that marginalizes a vast majority of each aforementioned group.

My argument of Glissant's elitist approach does not negate the credentials and potentials of his work, *Mémoires des esclavages*, in the reevaluation of slavery and colonialism. It raises awareness not only among the ignorant slave master descendants but also among slave descendants. To expose the level of ignorance on these critical issues, Glissant mentions his symbolic encounter with an old female inhabitant of Bordeaux, who reacts after one of his conferences on the slave trade: "Cela me trouble d'avoir vécu dans l'ignorance de cette réalité. Je ne vois aucune trace de ce que vous dites autour de moi, et je n'imagine pas Bordeaux organisant un tel commerce" (73). [It troubles me for having lived in the ignorance of this fact. I cannot see any trace around me of what you are saying, and I cannot imagine Bordeaux organizing such a trade.]

To palliate this exemplary ignorance of the entire public, Glissant challenges directly the Ministry of education of France to revise the programs and curricula of the crucial subjects of History and Geography from elementary school to university. Glissant argues that a great of problems faced by France in general in its challenging definition as a "nation une et indivisible" [one and indivisible] and "plurielle et divisée" [plural and divided] stem from the ignorance of the history of the country in its complete form. As a matter of fact, he attributes the tensions on the question of immigration, the subject matter for my third chapter: "France Disenfranchising," to the lack of knowledge and consideration of the historical relations between France and its former colonies: "Le passé historique demeure vague en France pour ce qui se rapporte aux anciennes

colonies” (127). [The historical past remains vague in France as far as the former colonies are concerned.]

This opinion is shared by some emerging writers from Francophone colonies such as the Djiboutian writer, Abdourahman Waberi, who is actually one of the signers of the aforementioned manifesto: *Pour une littérature-monde*. In his book entitled *Aux Etats Unis d’Afrique*, he promotes a newer poetics and politics of circulation, in the interactive and proactive sense of the word, to overcome the tensions between France and its former colonies, and by extension the West and the Rest. After filtering out the flaws of the French system of education modeled on an ethnocentric Western history and civilization, he pleas for an openness to the other rich cultures of the world in its diverse forms using Maya, his main character, as a spokesperson: “Si les récits fleurissent, si les langues circulent à nouveau, si les gens apprennent à s’identifier aux personnages surgis d’outre-frontières, ce sera le premier pas vers la paix” (201-2). [If the histories flourish, if the languages circulate again, if people learn to identify themselves to characters emerging from overseas, it will be the first step to peace.]

In both Glissant’s oeuvre and Waberi’s novel, the main targets as far as the lack of knowledge is concerned are descendants of slave masters. This perspective does not give the fuller picture of this reality. I argue that the same criticism is applicable to slave descendants. In Africa, there is indeed a fairly vague knowledge about slavery and colonialism in their complex natures. In the study of the slave trade for instance, the debate is bi-directional, as it focuses on the encounters and exchanges between Europe and Africa. The educational program rarely refers to the Caribbean, marginalizing thus the diasporic relationship between Africa and the Americas in general. Since

independence in 1960s, there have only been three editions of the World Festival of Black Arts in Africa under the initiative of President Leopold Senghor where artists and performers around the Black Diaspora reassess the relationships between Africa and the Americas. The World Festival of Black Arts happened in 1966 in Dakar, 1977 in Nigeria, and finally in 2010 in Dakar under the umbrella theme of the African Renaissance.

However, on the political ground, there are a few dynamic interactions between Africa and its Diaspora to the exception of countries like Liberia and Ghana as examined by Kevin Gaines in *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (2007). Recently, there has been a salutary effort by the former Senegalese President, Abdoulaye Wade, with his famous “Projet Haiti.” After the disastrous earthquake in Haiti, the Senegalese government under the leadership of the President and his Minister of International and Humanitarian Affairs, Mamadou Lamine Ba, offered 160 awards to Haitian students to pursue their studies in the national universities of Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar and Gaston Berger in Saint-Louis. In an interview with RFI on 11 October 2010, the Senegalese former Minister in charge of Humanitarian and International Affairs justifies this humanitarian action as a moral diasporic obligation because of the shared history between Africa and the Caribbean in general, and Senegal and Haiti in particular:

Le peuple haïtien qui a été frappé par ce séisme est un peuple originaire d’Afrique. Les Haïtiens d’aujourd’hui sont partis d’Afrique, de Guinée, disait-on à l’époque. Par humanisme, nous devons aller à leur secours à l’exemple de tous les peuples du monde, mais également parce que ce sont nos frères de sang et de lait. C’est pourquoi nous devons les accueillir chez nous.

The Haitian people who were stricken by this earthquake come from Africa. The Haitians of today left Africa, Guinea, as they used to say before. Out of Humanism, we must rescue them in the manner of all the people in the world, but also because they are our blood and foster brothers. That is why we welcome them in our homes.

In his delimitations of the principal orientations of the National Center for the Memory of Slaveries and their Abolitions, Glissant acknowledges the necessity to revive the historical relationships between Africa and the Americas, Europe, and all parties that are involved in this “shared past.” The main guiding principles of this center are truthfulness and openness: “Nous savons que les non-dits et les interdits nous barrent tout accès à la sérénité souhaitable de cette totalité-monde, et entretiennent l’énormité des conflits qui l’agitent” (138). [We know that silence and taboo prevent us from any access to desirable serenity of this world in its totality, and maintain the enormity of conflicts that agitate it.] These principles enable the involved parties, the victimizers and the victimized to comprehend the past in entirety and to foster a sense of self-transcendence through what he calls “Route des solidarités” [Road of solidarities] through which the self reconciles with the other despite his/her location of culture.

Rejecting reparation as an alternate solution to the wrongdoings of the past, Glissant lauds the efforts of the political leadership in France in their recognition of the 10th of May as the commemorating date for the memory of slaveries, a proposal he views as “une des premières réponses sans équivoque à tant d’interrogations, et qui ouvre sur tout le possible” (140) [one of the first unequivocal answers to a series of interrogations, and that opens to all the possible].

Glissant conceives the national center in four main dimensions: studies, activities, archives, and a memorial where all parties, and particularly the youth meet on a regular basis. His approach demarcates itself from the one adopted in previous centers and memorials around the world, which he finds less engaging in their research and study because founded on a traditional model of comparisons of different forms of slavery in precedence and subsequence to the referential Black slave trade. During the roundtable discussion mentioned earlier on “De l’esclavage au Tout-Monde,” Lothar Baier retraces the traditional approach: “Avant que je n’entre en contact avec les livres d’Edouard Glissant, j’avais comme beaucoup de gens une idée relativement banale et normalisée de l’esclavage” (64). [Before getting in touch with Edouard Glissant’s books, I, like many people, had a relatively banal and normalized idea about slavery.] Glissant proposes a transversal approach that meaningfully elucidates the diverse aspects of slavery in its most complete and critical manner. He warns against perpetuating beaten tracks on the general question of slavery. He gives exemplary studies undertaken by young researchers on new and seemingly unimaginable and peripheral works on slavery such as “Le rôle des femmes dans le marronnage à l’île de la Réunion” [The Role of Women in the Maroon adventure in the Reunion Island].

In the concluding lines of the chapter, it is crucial to evaluate in practice the current status of the project of the foundation of the Center directed by Glissant after the implementation of the Loi Taubira. All the questions analyzed beforehand remain more than actual(ized) because slavery comes at the crux of the debates in the establishment of the more accentuated relationship between Africa and Europe in general, and Africa and France (Françafrique) in particular precisely during the presidential administration of

Nicolas Sarkozy. One of the most memorable moment is the latter's polemic address, well known as "Le discours de Sarkozy à Dakar" [Sarkozy's Speech in Dakar] on 26 July 2007. In his fifty-minute address at Cheikh Anta Diop University, Sarkozy lectured about "le drame de L'Afrique" [The Tragedy of Africa] in a reproaching tone:

L'homme africain n'est pas assez rentré dans l'Histoire [...] Le problème de l'Afrique c'est qu'elle vit trop le présent dans la nostalgie du paradis perdu de l'enfance [...] Dans cet imaginaire où tout recommence toujours, il n'y a de place ni pour l'aventure humaine ni pour l'idée de progrès.
(*L'Afrique de Sarkozy* 195-6)

The African has not entered enough History [...]. The problem of Africa is that it overly lives the present in the nostalgia of the lost paradise of childhood [...]. In this imaginary world where everything starts anew, there is room neither for human adventure nor for the idea of progress.

An insult of Africa and its past, a "dédi d'histoire"²⁵ [a denial of history], Sarkozy's address drew criticisms from the African intelligentsia in its diverse composition. One of the fiercest responses to Sarkozy's speech comes from Aminata Traoré, a Malian writer and political activist who denounces it as racist and neocolonialist in her essay entitled *L'Afrique humiliée* (2008) [Africa humiliated]. Similarly, Achille Mbembe published an article entitled *L'Afrique de Nicolas Sarkozy* [Sarkozy's Africa] in *Le Messager* on 20 August 2007. In this widespread article, he criticizes the agenda of the Right Party in its attempt to revise and instrumentalize the entire History of France, viewing colonialism as "une entreprise bènevole et humanitaire" [a benevolent and

²⁵ Cf. *L'Afrique de Sarkozy: Un déni d'histoire* (2008) [Sarkozy's Africa: A Denial of History] directed by Jean-Pierre Chretien with the contributions of Jean-Francois Bayart, Achille Mbembe, Pierre Boile, and Ibrahima Thioub.

humanitarian enterprise]. He criticizes Sarkozy's patronizing attitude in the following terms: "[I]l s'autorise de parler de l'Afrique et des Africains à la manière du maître qui a pris la mauvaise habitude de maltraiter son esclave et d'avilir sa chose, et qui ne parvient pas à se dépeindre d'attitudes héritées d'un sinistre passé dont nous ne voulons plus." [He entitles himself to talk about Africa and Africans like a master who has taken the bad habit of ill-treating his slave and degrade his thing, and who cannot demarcate himself from inherited attitudes from a sinister past, which we do not want anymore.]

However, despite the lingering state of the question and the ineffectiveness of the Loi Taubira in its practical implementation, the efforts deployed by Black activists across the Diaspora and Glissant are far from being vain. Glissant's work is to be situated and understood in perspective and prospective. Villepin recognizes the valuable contribution of Glissant's visionary work: "Le travail réalisé par Edouard Glissant est tourné vers l'avenir, vers cette générosité et vers cet humanisme qui sont l'héritage du drame de l'esclavage" (13). [The work realized by Edouard Glissant is directed towards the future, towards that generosity and that humanism that are inherited from the tragedy of slavery.]

In his response during the roundtable discussion with Chevrier, Soyinka, Chamoiseau, Cheikh Hamidou Kane, and Lothar Baier, Glissant rejects the traditional claims, which suggest that slavery is too ancient and barbaric to be addressed. He argues that the effective and affective recognition of past slavery as a crime against humankind can be a shield against future similar catastrophes:

[J]e pense réellement que nous devrions exiger que l'esclavage soit
considéré comme un crime contre l'humanité et que nous devrions poser

cette question devant les instances de l'ONU et non pas devant les instances d'un tel ou tel pays" (57).

I actually think that we should demand that slavery be considered a crime against humankind and we should address this question in front of the United Nations Court, and not the court of such or such country.

The "nous" [we] is inclusive because slavery must be internalized as a unanimous problem. Glissant's approach calls for a sort of symbolic form of reparation, which consists in the foundations of monuments, sites, and centers by UNESCO and an international apology for the crimes committed against Africa and its descendants.

Glissant's dream of the foundation of a national center for the memory of slaveries and their abolitions has yet to materialize. However, his Institute Tout-monde in Paris serves quite effectively the purpose despite its lack of archival and spatial infrastructures. There are regular weekly and monthly activities and seminars that focus on transversal themes developed by Glissant in *Mémoires des esclavages*. His literary production is being more and more researched and studied in universities throughout the world. In France, his pedagogical booklet composed of *Les mémoires des esclavages et de leurs abolitions* [Memories of Slaveries and their Abolitions] and *Le guide d'utilisation: Du bon usage des textes et documents relatifs à la question de l'esclavage et de ses abolitions* [Manual Guide: Good Usage of Texts and Documents Related to Slavery and its Abolitions] is getting widely spread in middle schools and high schools in the Ile de France region and other parts of the country.

In bridging the gap between not only the past and the present but also the future through his assessment of Black experience in the Caribbean, Glissant paves a clear-cut

path to upcoming generations in the engagement into challenging issues faced the world in its totality. In all, his poetics of politics enables a development of a thoughtfully critical attitude that he would like to be adapted and adopted not only by Blacks but also by all races in their permanent identitarian quests. His visionary time poetics, which invites people to an “imaginary wholeland,” a decentralized center far from the realms of (pre)existing approaches whether colonial or postcolonial, has the potential of opening up new stimulating views in our current world.

CHAPTER II:

THE ARCHIPELAGIC EXCEPTION

L'important n'est pas ce que l'on a fait de toi, mais de ce que tu as fait de
ce que l'on a fait de toi. Frantz Fanon

What is important is not what they have done to you but what you have
done to what they have done to you.

L'insularité n'a d'isolement que dans les chimères. Marc-William Debono
Insularity is remoteness only in illusion.

The redefinition of the Black experience in French Caribbean fiction in general and in Glissant's poetics in particular, as developed in the opening chapter, necessitates an analysis of the significantly symbolic consequences of the two main historical paradigms of slavery and colonialism on the Caribbean archipelagic space and people over time. This problematic has been a recurrent theme in childhood narratives, novels, essays, manifestoes, and pamphlets throughout the different literary canons of French Caribbean fiction from René Maran's *Batouala* (1921) and Joseph Zobel's *La rue Cases-Nègres* (1950) to more contemporary works such as *Manifeste pour les produits de haute nécessité*, and *Traité pour le Grand derangement*.

In these aforementioned works, the Caribbean archipelago is commonly depicted as a space that has been fundamentally modeled by the historical paradigms of slavery and colonialism. Even though Caribbean authors commonly agree on the destructive impacts of these events, they recognize that the latter brought about the emergence of a

culturally rich archipelago. In the roundtable discussion evoked in the preceding chapter, “De l’esclavage au Tout-Monde,” Chamoiseau assesses the ambivalent phenomenon of slavery in the Caribbean archipelago: “Lorsque je considère la période esclavagiste, je vois de multiples agonies, beaucoup de souffrances, mais aussi beaucoup de renaissance, beaucoup de germination et de bourgeonnement” (61). [When I consider the period of slavery, I can see multiple agonies, multiple sufferings, but also a lot of renaissance, germination, and growth.]

Chamoiseau’s assessment of the ambivalent nature of slavery in general and its “positive impact” is reiterated by Glissant in his interview with Manthia Diawara in the latter’s memorable film: *Edouard Glissant: Un monde en relation*, in which Glissant argues that the Caribbean archipelago has become a referential “cradle of identities.” This position on the archipelagic significance is indeed explicitly broken down in *Le discours antillais*:

Mais le lieu en ce qui nous concerne n’est pas seulement la terre où notre peuple fut déporté, c’est aussi l’histoire qu’il a partagée (la vivant comme une non-histoire) avec d’autres communautés, dont la convergence apparaît aujourd’hui. Notre lieu, c’est les Antilles. [...] La mer des Antillais n’est pas le lac des Etats-Unis. C’est l’estuaire des Amériques. Dans un tel contexte, l’insularité prend un autre sens. On prononce ordinairement l’insularité comme un mode de l’isolement, comme une névrose d’espace. Dans la Caraïbe pourtant, chaque île est une ouverture. (249)

But for us, this place is not only the land where our people were transplanted, it is also the history they shared (experiencing it as

nonhistory) with other communities, with whom the link is becoming apparent today. Our place is the Caribbean. [...] The Caribbean Sea is not an American lake. It is the estuary of the Americas. In this context, insularity takes on another meaning. Ordinarily, insularity is treated as a form of isolation, a neurotic reaction to place. However, in the Caribbean each island embodies openness. (139)

As suggested in this quotation, Glissant redefines in a deconstructive fashion the classical notion of the archipelago from a space of insularity and remoteness to that of immersion, communion, diversity, and solidarity as apparent in the second epigraph of this chapter extracted from Debono's article entitled "Arts et sciences: Les fruits de l'archipel" (1998) [Arts and Sciences: The Fruits of the Archipelago].

Chamoiseau echoes this subversive redefinition of the archipelago in a more descriptive fashion in his article "Chanter l'île" (1993) [Singing the Island] through his exposition of two antagonistic attitudes towards the archipelago. Relating the customary activities of the archipelago dwellers, he demonstrates the latter's distinctive approaches to their milieu, which he refers to as "les terres-d'avant le continent" [ante-lands to the Continent]:

Les Caribes naviguaient sans cesse d'île en île, de rivage en rivage, au gré de leurs fêtes, de leurs alliances. [...] Le colon européen, lui, s'isole lui-même dans l'île: il est en rivalité avec d'autres puissances colonialistes. Il dresse des remparts, dessine des frontières des couleurs locales. (38)

The Caribbean would regularly navigate from island to island, from shore to shore, according to their celebrations, their alliances. [...] As for the

European settler, he or she isolates himself or herself in the island: he or she competes with other colonial powers. He or she draws up shields and frontiers of national colors.

Chamoiseau's depiction of the customs of the two main groups within the Caribbean defines not only the archipelagic realities during the early days of settlement but also the literary motives of Caribbean writers and theorists to re-present their "childhood kingdom" and to praise their ancestor, the migrant-nu portrayed by Glissant in *Le discours antillais* as: "L'Africain traité... [qui] ne pouvait emporter ses outils, les images de ses dieux, ses instruments usuels, ni donner de ses nouvelles à des voisins, ni espérer faire venir les siens, ni reconstituer au lieu de la déportation son ancienne famille" (66). [The enslaved African ...[who] could not bring his tools, the images of his gods, his daily implements, nor could he send news to his neighbors, or hope to bring his family over, or reconstitute his former family in the place of deportation (50).] Both Glissant and Chamoiseau value the endeavors of the migrant-nu in his or her ability to adapt to his or her new surroundings, the islands, which he or she transforms into "espaces mixtes et intermédiaires, riches et ouverts [qui] abolissent toute idée de solitude du circonscrit" (May Chehad 45) [mixt and intermediary spaces, rich and open, which abolish any idea of solitude of limitedness].

In this chapter, I argue that Glissant makes use of the Caribbean archipelago as the foundation of his poetics and politics of Relation. I will analyze how and why he posits this exceptional space as the ancestor and mirror of our contemporary creolized world. Firstly, I will define the spatial poetics and politics through his representation of the Caribbean archipelago as an "in-between" space wherein the migrant-nu has managed

to cultivate a sense of familiarity and complicity with the environment. Secondly, I will analyze his “praise” for the latter’s work of reconstitution and reconstruction through the theoretical instrument of the trace, which is one of Glissant’s most fundamental poetic tools. I will also revisit his historic moment of entanglement to better expose the strategic survival tactics undertaken by the migrant-nu to gradually liberate himself or herself from “mental slavery.” In other words, I will demonstrate how he or she recollects his or her traces and develops them into political weapons against the colonial yoke. Finally, I will analyze his socio-political vision of the archipelago in light of the memorable 2009 French Caribbean General Strikes through his contributions in *Manifeste pour les produits de haute nécessité* and *Traité pour le Grand Dérangement* as they corroborate and contrast to his primary political stances developed in *Le discours antillais* and *Poétique de la Relation*. I will thus demonstrate how he derives important lessons from the legacies of the migrant-nu in his elaboration of the alternatives to the prevailing situation of the Caribbean archipelago.

THE SPIRIT OF PLACE

To begin with, it is crucial to stress the preponderant function of space in general and the archipelago in particular in Glissant’s poetics as a whole. In *Le discours antillais*, Glissant reminds, “J’ai déjà dit que ce paysage (l’archipel caribéen) est plus démesuré dans nos littératures que la conformité physique de nos pays laisseraient à croire” (264). [I have already said that this landscape (the Caribbean archipelago) is more powerful in our literature than the physical size of countries would lead us to believe (154).] In fact, the centrality of this theme is discernable by its symbolic value in French Caribbean fiction as a whole all the more since it is one of the most significant differentiating

criteria of its three main canons namely Negritude, Antillanité and Créolité. As analyzed in the previous chapter, the stance of each literary expression is determined by the conceptualization and location towards the Caribbean space before, during, and after the crossing of the Atlantic. Symbolically, the first literary expression of Negritude imaginatively situates it before the Atlantic crossing, in Africa, a sort of “Paradise Lost,” which becomes a “Paradise Regained” in the literary expressions of Antillanité and Créolité.

In “L’espace dans la littérature antillaise” (1999) [Space in Caribbean Literature], Ernest Pépin highlights the centrality of space in Glissant’s oeuvre: “L’espace devient le centre d’une poétique et la poétique d’un décentrement des histoires” (3). [Space becomes the center of a poetics and the poetics of a decentering of histories.] Pépin’s argument on the centrality of space as a remarkable denominator of Glissant’s poetics and even politics is all the more justified because it is one of the three principal components of his poetics alongside with time and language. In his response to Phillipe Artières’s question on the different elements of his poetics in *Pour une littérature-monde*, Glissant stresses:

La première dimension est celle du paysage. Elle est, bien sûr, capitale parce que, dans cette relation des cultures du monde, et en particulier, dans la relation entre colonisés et colonisateurs, l’espace est des éléments fondamentaux... Par conséquent, libérer la relation au paysage par l’acte politique, par le dire poétique, est faire œuvre de libération. (78-9)

The first dimension is that of landscape. It is of course important because, in this relationship of world cultures in general and that between colonized

and colonizers; space is one of the key elements. Therefore, liberating the landscape by the political act, saying it poetically is a source of liberation. Glissant creates an interrelationnal connection between space and culture, as it is the encompassing element of peoples' cultures. In other words, Glissant's spatial poetics becomes a "Carrier of Culture" in the Cabralian sense:

Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative influence, which it exerts on the evolution of relationships between man and his environment, among men or groups of men within a society, as well as among different societies.

(Amilcar Cabral 15)

In his elaboration of his cultural poetics of space, Glissant reviews the physical site of the Caribbean archipelago in its relation, locally within the Americas, and internationally to the world in general. In his earlier works such as *Le discours antillais* and *Introduction à une poétique du Divers*, Glissant revisits the tripartite delimitation of the overall space of the Americas. In these works, he builds his spatial poetics around the special space in the Americas classically referred to as the Neo-America in contrast to Euro-America and Meso-America. The exceptional nature of the space he focuses on, Neo-America, resides in its occupation by the entrepreneurial migrant-nu. Developing a gradually close familiarity with the Caribbean land, the migrant-nu manages to adapt to the hostile environment of the plantation, which he turns into an interrelational area of dialogue and communion. This new open area created by the migrant-nu, the cradle of identities, is governed by a new politics of change and exchange among the oppressed communities so as to survive and resist the domination of the békés.

However, the exceptional work of the migrant-nu, as I will demonstrate in detail in the second part of the chapter on the notion of trace, is facilitated by the geophysical situation of the archipelago in its entirety, the most significant of which is water and the sea. In their *Dictionnaire des symboles* (1997) [Dictionary of Symbols], Jean Chevalier and Alain Gneerbrant define the poetically double nature of the sea in particular:

Symbole de la dynamique de la vie. Tout sort de la mer et tout y retourne: lieu des naissances, des transformations et des renaissances. Eaux en mouvement, la mer symbolise un état transitoire entre les possibles encore informels et les réalités formelles, une situation d'ambivalence, qui est celle de l'incertitude, du doute, de l'indécision et qui peut se conclure bien ou mal. De là vient que la mer est à la fois l'image de la vie et celle de la mort. (623)

A Symbol of the dynamics of life. Everything comes out of the sea and everything goes back to it: place of birth, transformations and rebirth. Waters in motion, the sea symbolizes a state of transition between newly informal possibilities and formal realities, a situation of ambivalence, which is that of uncertainty, doubt, and indecision and which can end in good or bad. From there comes the idea that the sea is at the same time the image of life and death.

The symbolic representation of the sea in general is characteristic of Glissant's oeuvre, in which the sea and water play an important role from *La Lézarde* to his late publications, the most illustrative of which is *La terre, l'eau, le feu, et les vents: Une anthologie de la*

poétique du Tout-Monde (2010) [The Earth, Water, Fire, and the Winds: A Poetic Anthology of the Tout-monde].

Alongside the open boat, the Caribbean Sea appears in most of his work as a “place of birth and rebirth” of the migrant-nu over the course of his or her voyage from Africa to Neo-America. The migrant-nu expands in a transformative fashion the archipelago from a simple “lieu d’origine” [a place of origins] to a “lieu commun” [place of communality], which explains the specialty of the Caribbean Sea over the Mediterranean Sea. In *Introduction à une poétique du Divers*, Glissant differentiates these two seas, the former as an open sea of transits and encounters and the latter as a closed sea held hostage by the different continents that surround it.

The Caribbean Sea is presented by Glissant as a signifier of the inter-relational histories mentioned earlier in my introductory presentation of the archipelago. In her book entitled *Un itinéraire poétique: Edouard Glissant et l’anti-anabase* (1979) [A Poetic Itinerary: Edouard Glissant and the Anti-Anabasis], Bernadette Cailler demonstrates the historical complicity between the migrant-nu and the sea:

Le cordon ombilical à la terre africaine, une fois pour toutes tranché, le flot d’une culture et de ses langues étranglé, il n’y aura plus d’autre possibilité pour le déporté que d’établir des relations nouvelles, d’abord avec son île, et puis de l’île à la mer, et de la mer au monde. (117)

The umbilical cord to the African land, once for all cut off, the flow of a culture and its languages strangled, there will be no other possibility for the deported than establishing new relationships, first with his island, and then from the island to the sea, and from the sea to the world.

Cailler does not give specific historical facts but she hints at the formation of an umbrella of histories made possible by the connection with the sea as “the unstable referent, zone of interrelationship and polyphony which provides an insight into Caribbean history” (*Edouard Glissant* 36). The other important allusion in Cailler’s quotation is how Glissant uses the sea as a discursive fundamental of his theorization of the Tout-monde, which is the unpredictable result of slavery and colonialism in Neo-America. Glissant makes an explicit reference to the archipelagic space as a fundamental theoretical basis, “un prélude ardent au Tout-Monde” (*Mémoires des esclavages* 96) [a vivid prelude to the Tout-Monde].

This discursive leitmotiv is demonstrated in Glissant’s oeuvre by the special image of the rhizome, a symbol he borrows from Deleuze and Guattari in *Mille Plateaux* (1980) [A Thousand Plateaus]. The re-presence of the rhizome is so significant that Peter Hallward, a renowned critic of Caribbean fiction, hails Glissant as “the most thoroughly Deleuzian author in the Francophone work” (*Absolutely Postcolonial* 67). Glissant refers to and redefines the rhizome as a clear indicator of the Caribbean milieu as an archipelagic exception. In *Poétique de la Relation*, Glissant elucidates his indebtedness to Deleuze and Guattari in his analytical opposition between the rhizome and the simple root:

Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari ont critiqué les notions de racine et peut-être d’enracinement. La racine est unique, c’est une souche qui prend tout sur elle et tue alentour; ils lui proposent le rhizome qui est une racine démultipliée, étendue dans la terre ou l’air, sans qu’aucune souche y intervienne en prédateur irrémédiable. (23)

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari criticized notions of the root and, even perhaps notions of being rooted. The root is unique, a stock taking all upon itself and killing all around it. In opposition to this, they propose the rhizome, an enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently.

(11)

The development of the rhizome is not limited to the physical description of the archipelago. Glissant reuses it in his articulation of identity through two antagonistic notions of thought, the aborescent and the rhizomatic to define the worlds of the colonized and the colonizers, which will be key concepts in my analysis of the dissertation's third chapter entitled "France Disenfranchising."

The rhizomatic structure posited by Glissant is actually a living credential in the Caribbean archipelago with the feature of the traditional creole garden. In the magazine, *Antilla*, Henri Pied gives a telling definition of the creole garden:

Un jardin créole est constitué d'un citronnier, d'un pied de piments, d'un cocotier, d'un arbre à pain, d'un goyavier, de plantes aromatiques et potagères; tous ces végétaux apparaissent en surface, très différents entre eux. Pourtant, sous la terre, leurs racines s'enfoncent et s'entremêlent, partageant la créolité, cette culture, ce patrimoine commun.

A Creole garden is composed of a lemon tree, roots of pepper, a coconut tree, a breadfruit tree, a guava tree, aromatic and vegetable plants; all these crops appear on the surface, very different from one another. Nevertheless,

under the earth, their roots dig in and mix up, sharing the creoleness, this culture, this common patrimony.

This presentation of the creole garden, which displays a sort of “vegetal creolization” signals imaginatively what Glissant calls in Manthia Diawara’s aforementioned film “le gain de la multiplicité” [the gain of multiplicity] that resulted from the historic voyage of the migrant-*nu* from the African continent to the Caribbean archipelago. This “gain of multiplicity” is a driving poetic force in his portrayal of the Caribbean archipelago as composite cultures in contrast to preexisting societies, the atavistic ones including those of Africa during and after the time of slavery and colonialism.

Glissant’s spatial politics does not mean a literally common occupation of the physical space of the world in general and the archipelago in particular, but rather an imaginative occupation of the relational space where the self recognizes the other as a partner and part of each other. In his contribution in *Pour une littérature-monde*, Glissant addresses his poetical and political conception of the world as follows: “En matière de politique aussi, ma référence la plus haute est le monde, non pas conçu comme l’internationale des prolétaires, mais comme lieu de rencontres, de choc de cultures, des humanités (77). [Likewise in politics, my highest reference was also the world not conceived as the International of workers, but as a place of encounters, of culture shocks, of humanities.]

Positing the archipelagic model as a mirror to the world, Glissant redefines this space as a sort of “contact zone,” an ambivalent area of coexistence and collaboration between its different dwellers. Glissant uses Nelson Mandela’s leadership as an exemplary collaborative model in the implementation of the rules and regulations in his

“contact zone.” In *Introduction à une poétique du Divers*, Glissant reminds us of an important maxim from Mandela’s autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*:

Tout le chemin que j’ai fait jusqu’ici de 1912 à 1994, toutes ces luttes, ce n’est rien à côté de ce qui nous reste à faire, parce que ce qui nous reste à faire c’est le plus important, c’est de faire vivre ensemble toutes ces populations. (24)

All the long way I have gone up to now from 1912 to 1994, all the flights are nothing compared to what we are to accomplish, because what is left is the most important thing, it is to make all these peoples live together.

Unlike the vast majority of postcolonial and colonial theorists, Glissant does not visualize the colonial or postcolonial space as a unique place of tension and battlefield. In other words, he questions the classical boundaries that picture the world in binary and antagonistic logic Black/White, Colonized/Colonizer, Other/Self among other denominations. He advocates for the development of what Alexis Nouss calls a “monde métis” [metis world] in his *Plaidoyer pour un monde métis* (2005) [Plea for a Metis World]: “Les Caraïbes ou l’Amérique du Sud fournissent des exemples où la spatialité tierce est une réalité effective” (62). [The Caribbean or South America provides us with examples where third space is an effective reality.]

Nouss’s “metis world”, which is an iconographical representation of Glissant’s oeuvre, echoes what Bhabha theorizes in his collection of essays, *The Location of Culture* (1991), as a “third space,” a liminal “in-between” space that goes beyond boundaries by opening up “the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy”(5). Emphasizing the power of negotiation between the

Self and the Other, both Glissant and Bhabha argue that the realization of dialogues between cultures can only occur if borders are turned into in-between spaces rather than clear-cut and marked zones.

This new way of spatial poetics that seeks to establish interconnections between cultures is meant not just for the leadership of the so-called peripheries but also for that of the supposed centers. In other words, Glissant uses the “experience” of the Caribbean archipelago as a model to the world in totality. In his analysis of Glissant’s *Tout-monde* concept in “De l’esclavage au Tout-Monde,” Jacques Chevrier, stresses the symbolical importance of the Caribbean space in relation to the current world: “Ce processus, cette alchimie anthropologique a produit l’identité créole et, finalement la poétique du monde actuel” (62-3). [This process, this anthropological alchemy, has produced the creole identity and, finally the poetics of the current world.]

In an interview with CARE,²⁶ Glissant assesses the current situation of the former colonies in a challenging tone:

Ce qui dans l’Histoire a fait peser en nous des ratages, aujourd’hui, dans les histoires qui se rassemblent sans s’éluder, nous projette tels quels en pleine problématique du monde. Ce qui était notre faiblesse devient notre force. Nous avons raté la décolonisation, les nationalismes, les internationalismes, qui étaient certes les voies de l’Histoire. Peut être ne raterons nous pas la mise en relation, le relatif non systématique.

What in History has burdened us in terms of failures, nowadays, in the histories that assemble us without eluding one another, projects us as such

²⁶ CARE stands for Centre Antillais de Recherches et d’Etudes [Caribbean Center for Research and Studies].

in full problematic of the world. What was our weakness turns into a force. We have missed decolonization, nationalisms, internationalisms, which were in fact the paths of History. Maybe we will not miss Relation, the non-systematic relative.

Glissant's position is a sort of a "wake-up call" addressed primarily to the failed leadership of the postcolony whom he urges to derive lessons from the rich past experience of the migrant-*nu*, who managed to turn unfavorable situations into favorable ones during the area and era of slavery and colonialism

Glissant's politics of spatiality is embedded in his famous poetic and political slogan mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation: "agis dans ton lieu, pense avec le monde" [act in your place, think with the world]. This slogan is explained by his redefinition of the archipelago and the continent. He contrasts these distinct spaces to visualize the world in its totality. To explain these spaces, Glissant associates these spaces with the notion of "pensée" [thought]. In his more recent works such as *Traité du Tout-Monde* and *Philosophie de la Relation*, he uses both spaces to explain the political strategies set up by the leadership of contemporary nations. In the first, Glissant posits the archipelagic thought as the operating mode of his notion of Relation in disfavor of the systematic and systemic practices:

La pensée archipélique convient à l'allure de nos mondes. Elle en emprunte l'ambigu, le fragile, le dérive. Elle consent à la pratique du détour, qui n'est ni fuite ni renoncement. [...] C'est s'accorder à ce qui du monde s'est diffusé en archipels précisément, ces sortes de diversités dans l'étendue, qui pourtant rallient des rives et marient des horizons. Nous

nous apercevons de ce qu'il y avait de continental, d'épais et qui pesait sur nous, dans les somptueuses pensées de système qui jusqu'à ce jour ont régi l'Histoire des humanités, et qui ne sont plus adéquates à nos éclatements, à nos histoires ni à nos non moins somptueuses errances. La pensée de l'archipel nous ouvre ces mers. (31)

The archipelagic thought is well suited to the ways of our worlds. It adopts its ambiguity, fragility and derivation. It consents to its detour practice, which is neither flight nor escape, nor resignation. [...] It is a way to adapt to how the world has precisely expanded to archipelagoes, these types of diversities at large. We have noticed that what were continental, thick, and which weighted on us, in the sumptuous thoughts of systems, which have so far governed the History of humanities and are not longer adequate to our explosions, to our histories, not even to our sumptuous errancies. The archipelagic thought opens for us the seas.

This quotation summarizes well Glissant's socio-political world vision, which he shares with his collaborators in the projection of the Caribbean archipelago at the aftermath of the 2009 General Strikes. It actually exposes the failed policies of the new postcolonial or rather neocolonial leadership, the "Hellenized elite" to use Jean Paul Sartre's terminology in his preface to Fanon's *Les Damnés de la terre* [*The Wretched of the Earth*], who continues to hold hostage the national(istic) space.

TRACE: RECONSTITUTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

My analysis of the archipelagic exception has so far revolved around the migrant-nu's space of action: the Caribbean archipelago. In other words, I have demonstrated how

Glissant pays tribute to the latter for his heroic transformation of the archipelago into a lively livable space despite the pressures of slavery and colonialism. To have a fuller picture of this tribute, it is crucial to analyze Glissant's notion of trace, an explicit "mot-source" [source-word] to use Jean-Louis Joubert's terminology in his contribution, "L'archipel Glissant" [Glissant: The Archipelago] in *Poétiques d'Edouard Glissant* (1999) [Poetics of Edouard Glissant].

Trace is a fundamental poetic tool that recurs frequently in Edouard Glissant's oeuvre particularly in his essays wherein he exposes the monumental legacy of the migrant-nu. As mentioned above, Glissant pays a vibrant tribute to the latter via trace in his enterprise to recreate himself out of nothing. In *Traité pour le Grand dérangement*, Glissant and his co-writers praise in unison the entrepreneurial work of self-recreation and assertion exerted by the migrant-nus, their ancestors:

Au plus profond du deshumain esclavagiste, nos ancêtres avaient déployé des stratégies qui s'inscrivaient dans ce que l'humain avait de mieux humain: la solidarité, le partage, la mise en commun... ils avaient des "convois" qui mutualisaient leurs moyens et qui leur assuraient d'être enterrés dignement. (14)

In the deeper environment of slave inhumanity, our ancestors had deployed strategies that were directed to the most humane characteristic of the human being: solidarity, sharing, and interrelation...they had "groups" that mutualized their belongings and assured their burial with dignity.

Glissant uses the survival tactics of the migrant-nu to establish his or her legacy as a trace that has to be revived in our current situation. In *Introduction à une poétique du*

Divers, he poetically defines trace as “la poussée tremblante du toujours nouveau” (69) [the trembling force of the always new] to show its useful and progressive nature in human interactions. This reverential characteristic is regularly renewed in Glissant’s oeuvre from his early works to the fairly recent ones such as *Traité du Tout-monde*, in which not only the word appears many a time but it also is capitalized, as it becomes an ambivalent marker of the “co-presence of presence and absence.” To demonstrate this special attribution of trace, Glissant invades the richly intimate environment of the migrant-nu at the heat of his struggles for self-affirmation.

However, the invasion of the latter’s personal or rather communal space is far from being a mere nostalgic return to the past, rather it is a sort of “detour” that links both areas and eras of the past, the present and even the future as argued in the opening chapter of the dissertation. This detour appears as a solidifying bridge across the Caribbean archipelago over time and space. In the introduction to her translation of Glissant’s *Poetics of Relation*, Betsy Wing stresses this particular link, a logical connector between the past generations and the current ones: “Utilization (utilisation), tooling of the past to serve the present is Glissant’s work” (xvii). Wing’s analysis of the importance of the past as a central tool of demarcation and self-identification is not exclusive to Glissant’s oeuvre. It is indeed expandable to French Caribbean fiction at large, the most illustrative work being Zobel’s *La rue Cases-Nègres*.

Zobel’s novel is all the more relevant in the analysis of trace in Glissant’s oeuvre because M. Médouze, a central character in the novel, can be seen as the typical embodiment of Glissant’s migrant-nu. Hemming his historical narrative on Africa through orature, Zobel presents a telling duo, M. Médouze, who narrates to José, the

main protagonist and attentive student, stories that establish a correlative link between the past and the present. M. Médouze plays the role of a “tracer” of the African heritage, the African griot to a certain extent, the acclaimed custodian of traditions as demonstrated by Djibril Tamsir Niane in his epic *Soundjata ou l'épopée mandingue* (1960) [Sundjata Epic of the Mande]: “Nous sommes les sacs à paroles, nous sommes les sacs qui renferment des secrets plusieurs fois séculaires. L’art de parler n’a pas de secret pour nous; sans nous les noms des rois tomberaient dans l’oubli, nous sommes la mémoire des hommes...” (9). [We are the bags of words, we are the bags that contain age-old secrets. The art of speaking has no secret for us, without us names of kings would be forgotten, we are the memory of the people.]

The presentation of the griot by Niane displays a clear-cut distinction between the African griot/storyteller and that of the Caribbean in their methodological approach vis-à-vis the past. If the African storyteller commonly draws from the glorious feats to build his narrative, the Caribbean one, as displayed in Zobel’s novel, relates the status quo to explain the current state of affairs of his people. M. Médouze retraces his own story, his slave narrative before, during, and after the Atlantic crossing, to raise José’s consciousness about the challenges at stake in 1930s Martinique. In an artful fashion through tales, riddles, M. Médouze helps José immortalize the African traces, which he uses as fundamental elements in one of his class compositions. Besides, the main difference between the African griot/storyteller and the Caribbean one is that the former’s story is centered on individuals while the latter’s on communal common people, making him thus a sort of “medium pour le cri collectif” [medium for the collective cry] (Renée Larrier 276).

The retracing of the past through orature, as analyzed in the work of Zobel, is a recurrent motive in both Glissant's fictional and non-fictional works. In *Le discours antillais* for instance, he presents himself as "un héritier du conteur" [an heir of the storyteller] who defends orality as a naturally integral part of Caribbean cultures:

Il n'est étonnant d'affirmer que pour nous la musique, le geste, la danse sont des modes de communication, tout aussi importants que l'art de la parole. C'est par cette pratique que nous sommes d'abord sortis des Plantations; c'est à partir de cette oralité qu'il faut structurer l'expression esthétique de nos cultures. Il ne s'agit pas de prétendre que l'écriture nous est inutile... Il s'agit pour nous de concilier enfin les valeurs des civilisations de l'écrit et les traditions longtemps infériorisées des peuples de l'oralité. (462)

It is nothing new to declare that for us music, gesture, dance are forms of communication, just as important as the gift of speech. This is how we first managed to emerge from the plantation: esthetic form in our cultures must be shaped from these oral forms. It is not a matter of claiming that writing is of no use to us... For us, it is a matter of ultimately reconciling the values of the culture of writing and the long-repressed traditions of orality. (248-9)

This reconciliation of the written and the oral is apparent in Glissant's oeuvre as he adopts and adapts a creolized style where each form mutually echoes the other. In his works, he establishes an art of preservation of the African traces in an implicit and explicit fashion. In

Poétique de la Relation, he inscribes an umbrella of oral references such as songs and poems within the essay as means of substantiation of his theoretical analysis.

Furthermore, in *Traité du Tout-Monde*, he specifically addresses the interrelationship between the written and the oral forms: “Ecrire c’est vraiment dire: s’épandre au monde sans se disperser ni s’y diluer, et sans craindre d’y exercer ces pouvoirs de l’oralité qui conviennent tant à la diversité de toutes choses, la répétition, le ressassement, la parole circulaire, le cri en spirale” (121). [Writing is actually saying: expanding to the world with neither self-dispersion nor self-dilution into it, and without fearing to exert into it these powers of orality, which are so convenient to diversity of all things, repetition, continuous banging, circular speech, spiral shout.]

The Creolists in their *Eloge de la Créolité* revive this approach to orality. They propose deep rootedness in orality as a means of expression of their creole identity. In their enterprise to rectify the classical Caribbean History as imposed by the colonizers, they define themselves as “paroles sous l’écriture” [speech under writing]. Through oral forms, they unearth the different facets of creole histories: “Notre écriture doit accepter sans partage nos croyances populaires, nos pratiques magico-religieuses, notre réalisme merveilleux, les rituels liés aux ‘milan,’ aux phénomènes du ‘majo,’ aux joutes de ‘ladja,’ aux ‘koudmen.’ Ecouter notre musique et goûter à notre cuisine” (41). [Our writing must unreservedly accept our popular beliefs, our magico-religious practices, our magic realism, the “milan,” to the jousts of the “ladja,” the “koudmen” rituals. It must listen to our music and taste our cooking (101).]

Glissant centers his theorization of trace through its temporal connotation as demonstrated in the preceding paragraphs about the oral as a mode of expression of the

legacy of the migrant-nu. His theorization echoes Derrida's in one of his foundational deconstruction text, *De la grammatologie* (1967) [Of Grammatology], in which the latter insists on the original characteristic of trace: "La trace n'est pas seulement la disparition de l'origine, elle veut dire ici [...] que l'origine n'a même pas disparu, qu'elle n'a jamais été constituée qu'en retour par une non origine, la trace qui devient l'origine de l'origine" (90). [Trace is not only the disappearance of origin, it means that [...] the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin (61).]

Derrida's definition of trace is well developed in Glissant's oeuvre in general and in his portrayal of the migrant-nu in particular. He transforms trace into a guiding tool in his representation of the moment of entanglement, "the origin of the origin," which is indeed a key phase in his redefinition of Caribbean histories. This moment is a phase of revelation that offers a significant value to the past, which he calls a "prophetic vision of the past" in *Introduction à une poétique du Divers*: "C'est-à-dire que le passé ne doit pas être seulement recomposé de manière objective (ou de même subjective) par l'historien, il doit être aussi rêvé de manière prophétique pour les gens, les communautés et les cultures dont le passé, justement, a été occulté (64). [It means that the past should not be solely recomposed in an objective manner (or even subjective) by the historian, it should be dreamed in a prophetic manner for the people, the communities and the cultures, the past of which, exactly, was disguised.]

A useful tool for the migrant-nu in his combat against the colonists, trace enables the former to liberate himself or herself from the yoke of the latter. In *Tout-monde*, Glissant demonstrates this particular power of trace:

La trace court entre les bois de la mémoire et les boucans du monde nouveau...La musique est une trace qui se dépasse, le jazz, la biguine, le reggae, la salsa. [...] La langue créole est une trace qui a jazzé dans les mots français [...] La trace vous libère quand on vous tient par force sur le grand chemin pavé, goudronné. (238)

Trace runs between the woods of memory and the rackets of the new world... Music is a trace that exceeds, jazz, biguine, reggae, salsa. [...] The Creole language has jazzed in French words [...] Trace liberates you when you are held by brute force into the big paved and tarred road.

This quotation illustrates how Glissant uses trace as a denotative symbol of the unsystematic way of life of the migrant-nu as contrasted to that of the slave masters. Similarly, Chamoiseau and Confiant insist on the power of trace as a sharp difference marker of the aforementioned worlds by analyzing its physical dimension in their seminal book, *Lettres créoles* (1991) [Creole Letters]. In lieu of trace, they specifically analyze “tracées” [tracks]:

La chose est frappante; à côté des routes coloniales dont l’intention se projette tout droit, à quelque chose, à quelque utilité prédatrice, se déploient d’infinies petites sentes que l’on appelle tracées. Elaborées par les Nègres marrons, les esclaves, les Créoles, à travers les bois et les mornes du pays, ces tracées disent autre chose. Elles témoignent d’une spirale coloniale que le plan colonial n’avait pas prévue. (12)

It is striking; there are next to the colonial roads the intent of which projects itself straightforward, to something, to some predatory usefulness,

infinite small footpaths called tracks. Highly developed by the runaway Blacks, slaves, Creoles, through the woods, the hills of the country these tracks mean something else. They give evidence of colonial spiral that the colonial plan had not contemplated.

The descriptions of trace/tracks by Glissant, Chamoiseau, and Confiant demonstrate a sound familiarity of the oppressed migrant-nu vis-à-vis the Caribbean nature, a victory of the latter over his slave master. These unpredictable roads are “camouflaged” ways taken by the migrant-nu, the slave, to liberate himself or herself from the strangleholds set up by the slave master.

After theorizing trace through its temporal dimension to demonstrate the combatting tactics set up by the migrant-nu against the slave master, Glissant analyzes how the reconstitution of traces triggers off the emergence of a new perspective and prospective of society at large. In other words, he demonstrates how the migrant-nu pictures an entirely different notion of culture, culture as Multiple as opposed to that of the One, which is perpetuated by the monolithic traditional cultures imposed on them by their masters. In his contribution “Edouard Glissant: Du tellurique à l’universel” [Edouard Glissant: From the Telluric to the Universal] in *Horizons d’Edouard Glissant* [Horizons of Edouard Glissant, Antonio Ferreira de Brito argues that Glissant recuperates the migrant-nu’s conceptualization of culture as the basis of his poetic intention. He reclaims the Multiple and refutes the One and the Absolute by proclaiming a “diversité du Un et l’unité du Divers” (23) [diversity of the One and unity of the Diverse].

This notion of diversity implies a dialogue between different cultures and negates an imposition of any form of an established model. Glissant’s analysis of culture as

Multiple through the lens of his notion of trace echoes Bhabha's notion of hybridity in his articulation of the notion of nation on "DissemiNation" in *The Location of Culture*. Bhabha calls for a "hybrid national narrative that turns the nostalgic past into the disruptive anterior and displaces the historical present-opens up to other histories and incommensurable narrative subjects" (240). Both Glissant and Bhabha agree that the troubles of the modern society are caused by the cultivation of values such as nationalism, homogeneity rather than *nationness* and heterogeneity, which are widespread in not only the West but also in the Rest, including the Caribbean archipelago.

In order to have a fuller picture of Glissant's theorization of the notion of trace, it is worth associating it with his common instrument of "pensée" [thought], a strategic move to elaborate the relational implications between his poetics and politics. In his essays, he commonly differentiates the aforementioned worlds through the terminologies of the "pensée de la trace" [the thought of the trace], a new demarcating way from the "pensée de systèmes" [the thought of systems]:

La pensée de la trace s'appose par opposition à la pensée de systèmes, comme une errance qui oriente. Nous connaissons que la trace est ce qui nous met, tous, d'où que venus, en relation. La pensée de la trace permet d'aller loin des étranglements de systèmes. Elle réfute par là tout comble de possession... Elle est l'errance qu'on partage. (*Traité du Tout-Monde* 19-20)

The thought of the trace appends in contrast with the thought of systems like an orienting errantry. We know that trace relates us no matter where

we come from. The thought of the trace enables us to go far from the strangulations of the systems. It refutes thereby any limit of possession...

It is an errantry that we share.

By way of exemplification, Glissant uses language as the relational instrument that regulates his “pensée de la trace,” recognizing the singular diversities that characterize the world of the trace and that of the imposing systems. Language becomes the fundamental trace in the Caribbean histories that enables the migrant-nu to “rule over” the speakers of the “langue empreinte,” [systemic language] the colonial language as mentioned by Lise Gauvin in her chapter “L’imaginaire des langues” [The Imaginary of Languages] in *Poétiques d’Edouard Glissant* [Poetics of Edouard Glissant].

The exclusiveness of language among other traces is a recurrent question in Glissant’s oeuvre as he posits it as a manifest weapon in the recreation of the migrant-nu’s personality. On the one hand, this argument is in line with the classical definition of language by linguists such as Emile Benveniste, who mentions in his first volume of *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (1966) [Problems in General Linguistics]: “C’est de et par le langage que l’homme se constitue comme sujet; parce que le langage seul fonde en réalité, dans sa réalité qui est celle de l’être, le concept d’“égo” (259). [It is from and by language that man creates himself as a subject; because language alone constitutes in reality, in its reality, which is that of the being, the concept of the “ego.”] On the other hand, Glissant’s conceptualization of language differs to a large extent from Benveniste’s. Even though Glissant agrees on the power of language in the process for self-affirmation, he demonstrates that, in the Caribbean, the “concept” of the ego is diluted to the benefit of the group. The migrant-nu establishes the Creole language in an

inter-relational way through what Glissant calls “la pratique de la trace” [the practice of trace], a strategy of detour that puts into coexistence the “langue empreinte” [systemic language], the colonial language, and the “langues-errance” [errantry languages], the languages of the colonizers.

Glissant analyzes in a laudatory fashion the enterprise of reconstitution of a communal language by the migrant-nu. Under “hard times,” the slaves managed to create the Creole language, a unifying language through a combination of the different dialects of French, namely Norman, Poitevin, and Picard, and a great deal of Western African languages such as Wolof, Yoruba, Ewe, Akan, etc. He praises the inventiveness of the migrant-nu in *Introduction à une poétique du Divers*: “Il était absolument imprévisible qu’en deux siècles, une communauté asservie ait pu produire une langue à partir d’éléments aussi hétérogènes” (20). [It was absolutely unpredictable that, in two centuries, an enslaved community would have managed to create a language out of heterogeneous elements.] The creation of the Creole language elevates the slaves over their masters because the French language was divided into different dialects, thereby making the communication among its interlocutors difficult. Glissant dramatizes how the slave masters were ignorant of the exclusive plan set up by their own slaves as they conceive the Creole language as “petit nègre” or “corrupt French.” In response to the unfounded claims of the slave masters, the migrant-nu views his language as a unique form of defiance: “Tu veux me réduire au bégaiement, je vais systématiser le bégaiement, nous verrons si tu t’y retrouveras” (*Le discours antillais* 32). [You wish to reduce me to a childish babble; I will make this babble systematic, we shall see if you can make sense of it (20).]

THE SITUATION OF THE ARCHIPELAGO TODAY

In the two previous parts of the chapter, I have insisted on the exceptional nature of the Caribbean archipelago by analyzing how Glissant represents the valuable work of the migrant-*nu* in his enterprise of reconstituting traces. In this last part, I argue that Glissant and his collaborators project the set of reactive yet proactive mechanisms, in which the migrant-*nu* engages, as valuable assets in the fight against the prevailing disillusionment in the Caribbean archipelago today, at the aftermath of the 2009 French Caribbean General Strikes. Throughout my argument, I will analyze the fundamental political resolutions, which are a sort of “recours et retour aux sources” [return and recourse to the sources] proposed by Glissant and his collaborators from Martinique, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, and Reunion in *Manifeste pour les produits de haute nécessité* and *Traité pour le Grand Dérangement*.

Before pointing out the contributions in these aforementioned works, it is important to give a brief presentation of the historic event. The French Caribbean General Strikes started on 20 January 2009 in Guadeloupe and expanded progressively to other DOM-TOMs, namely Martinique, Guyane, and Reunion, by 5 March, lasting for an approximate total of 44 days of work stoppage that paralyzed a great deal of sectors of economy and administration. Under the unified leadership of unionists from these DOM-TOMs, the LKP,²⁷ and the Caribbean populations demonstrated against the expensiveness of the living conditions and the exploitation of the natural resources during the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy. They denounced what Christiane Taubira, the then Member of the National Assembly for French Guiana and current Minister of Justice,

²⁷ LKP stands in Creole for Liyannaj Kont Pwogitasyon [Collective against Excessive Exploitation].

called “social apartheid,” a “cast system” that privileges the békés over the vast majority of the people, the “wretched of the earth,” who are victims of “le dogme du libéralisme et de socialisation antisociale (*Manifeste pour les produits de haute nécessité* 2). [The dogma of liberalism et anti-social socialization.] The LKP met up with the local representatives, “the puppets of the Metropole,” but in vain, because the situation worsened day in and day out throughout the long period of the General Strikes.

In their elaborate one-hundred-twenty-claim platform, the LKP denounced the marginalization of the DOM-TOMs in the current state of affairs of the Nation in all sectors such as education, employment, housing, environment to name but a few. In an interview with the *Journal du dimanche* on 14 February 2009, “On frôle l’apartheid social” [On the Brink of Social Apartheid], Christiane Taubira exposes the challenges faced by the French Caribbean, the most salient of which was unemployment.²⁸ She fustigates the policies of marginalization established by Sarkozy administration: “L’outre-mer n’est pas une danseuse chère à entretenir mais un territoire oublié de la République ou plutôt un territoire spolié.” [The overseas is not a dancer expensive to look after but a forgotten territory of the Republic or rather a dispossessed territory.]

In *Manifeste pour les produits de haute nécessité*, Glissant and his collaborators reiterate Taubira’s remarks, endorse and magnify the exceptional work of the LKP and their followers in their ability to reunite all the workers in the different sectors across the Caribbean archipelago to a communal set of goals:

[L]a force de ce mouvement est d’avoir su organiser sur une même base ce
qui jusqu’alors s’était vu disjoint, voire isolé dans la cécité catégorielle, à

²⁸ The official average rates of unemployment in 2008-2009 were 8% in the Metropole and 23% in the DOM-TOMs

savoir les luttes jusqu'alors inaudibles dans les administrations, les hôpitaux, les établissements, les entreprises, les collectivités territoriales, tout le monde associatif, toutes les professions artisanales et libérales. (1)

[T]he strength of this movement is to have managed to organize on a same basis what had been so far separated, and even isolated in a blind categorization, that is to say the fights so far inaudible in the administration, hospitals, schools, enterprises, territorial collectivities, all the associative world, all the traditional and liberal professions.

This “bottom-up politics” developed by the LKP leadership called “la dynamique du liyannaj”²⁹ [the liyannaj dynamics] defined as “une stratégie qui est d’allier et de rallier, de lier et de relier, et de relayer tout ce qui se trouvait désolidarisé” (*Manifeste pour les produits de haute nécessité* 2) [a strategy which is to ally and rally, unite and reunite, and to relay everything that was torn apart] echoes Glissant’s practice of trace, which a defining characteristic of his social vision over the course of his career as a committed writer and political activist as mentioned in the first chapter.

This political stance is reflected in his essays, where he defends a sort of “liyannaj dynamics” that calls for a collaboration of all groups within the Caribbean archipelago: “Les problématiques de l’antillanité révèlent non pas de l’élaboration intellectuelle mais du partage et de la communauté, non pas de l’exposé doctrinal mais des espoirs débattus, et non pas de nous d’abord mais de nos peuples avant tout” (*Le discours antillais* 424). [The problematics of Caribbeanness are not part of an intellectual exercise but to be shared collectively, not tied to the elaboration of a doctrine but to the product of a common dream, not related to us primarily but our people before everything else (224).]

²⁹ Liyannaj in Creole means Collective as in LKP.

Glissant's holistically archipelagic approach stresses that the "Caribbean future" rests on the collective efforts of the peoples across the Caribbean archipelago in a similar way as he collaborates with writers and activists from Guadeloupe, Guiana, Martinique, and Reunion in the writing of the two manifestoes.

In both works, Glissant and his collaborators urge the LKP leadership to be more politically assertive. In other words, they encourage the latter not to reduce their movement into an "event thing": "Ce mouvement se doit de fleurir en vision politique, laquelle devrait ouvrir à une force politique de renouvellement et de projection apte à nous accéder à la responsabilité de nous mêmes par nous-mêmes et au pouvoir de nous-mêmes sur nous-mêmes" (*Manifeste pour les produits de haute nécessité* 4). [This movement has a duty to expand into a political vision, which must transform into a political force of projection and renewal that is developable to the responsibility of ourselves by ourselves and to the power of ourselves over ourselves.]

Glissant and his collaborators reject the model of representation of "pseudos-pouvoirs" [fake powers] imposed to them by Sarkozy's administration. These fake leaders are depicted as those called by Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* as "mimic men," who readopt "a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (85).

These mimic men are generally portrayed in many (post)colonial texts as politically and culturally renegades who "envy" the colonial leaders in the Fanonian sense of the word. In *Les damnés de la terre*, Fanon analyzes the notion of envy through the effect and affect of colonialism on the colonial subject:

Le regard que le colonisé jette sur la ville du colon est un regard d'envie. Rêves de possession. Tous les modes de possession: s'asseoir à la table du colon, coucher dans le lit du colon, avec sa femme si possible. Le colonisé est un envieux (5).

The look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession-all manner of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep at the settler's bed, with his wife if possible. The colonized man is an envious man. (32)

Despite the direct and directed indictment against the French metropole and their local associates, the "envious" leaders," Glissant and his collaborators do not call for an immediate and separatist independence of each and every DOM-TOM. They develop a principle of collective responsabilization, which draws away from their designated "trois piquets d'écartement" [three poles of shift], which are "Assimilation, Autonomie, Indépendance" [Assimilation, Autonomy, Independence]. This strategic principle of responsabilization is based on interdependence not only between the different Caribbean territories but also the metropole through a gradual process:

S'accorder sur le processus c'est se donner une chance de rester ensemble dans l'élan créé par l'événement. C'est se libérer l'esprit de la rigidité du dogme ou de la peur, afin de vivre sans crainte ni division ce désir d'être, d'exister, de décider pour nous-mêmes sur des terres qui sont nôtres. (10)

Agreeing on the process entails giving one another a chance to stay together in line with the dimension created by the event. It entails also liberating one's mind from the rigidity of dogma or fear in order to revive

without fear or division this desire to be, to exist, and to decide on our own in lands that are ours.

This stance promoted by Glissant and his collaborators in the treatment of the Caribbean disillusionment appears in sharp contrast with that of most postcolonial theorists and leaders such as their diasporic partners in the African Continent at the aftermath of colonialism. In other words, they do not fall of the pitfalls of postcolonialism with the emergence of separate nations one after the other in the 1960s. In their developed principle of interdependence in *Traité pour le Grand Dérangement*, they adopt Glissant's theory of Relation, which excludes any form of blind nationalism, which is according to Arif Dirlik "a new form of colonialism in the suppression and appropriation of local identities for a national identity ("Rethinking Colonialism" 428).

Interdependence is a key principle that regulates Glissant's vision of the world as a Tout-monde, a concept that I will demonstrate in more depth in the dissertation's final chapter, "Towards Imaginary Wholelands." This principle is embedded in his popular spatial maxim announced in the introduction and analyzed in the concluding lines of this chapter's first part "agis dans ton lieu, pense avec le monde" [act in your place, think with the world]. Glissant urges every people in general and the archipelagic ones in particular to develop a perpetual attitude of responsibility to fight against any form of imposition. In this regard, Glissant and his collaborators consider poetically and politically "responsibility" as a fundamental "weapon of high necessity." They show their resentment to the idea of departmentalization, a neocolonial tactic used by the metropolitan administration to revive what they call "l'absurdité coloniale" [colonial absurdity]: "C'est comme si la France avait été formatée pour importer toute son

alimentation et ses produits de grande nécessité depuis des milliers et des milliers de kilomètres” (5). [It is as if France had been formatted to import all its foods and products of great necessity from thousands and thousands of kilometers.]

To reduce and even eliminate this dependency towards the metropole, Glissant and his collaborators strategically propose the change of attitude vis-à-vis the Caribbean archipelago positing it as an “in-between” space of the Caribbean and by the Caribbean: “Il y a donc une haute nécessité à nous vivre caribéens dans nos imports exports vitaux, à nous penser américain pour la satisfaction de nos nécessités, de notre autosuffisance énergétique et alimentaire”(5). [There is therefore a high necessity for us to live Caribbean in our vital import-export system, for us to think American for the satisfaction of our needs, and of our energy and food self-sufficiency.] Such a consideration requires a strong cultivation of a deep archipelagic feeling and a demarcation from one of the aforementioned three poles of shift, which is assimilation, the assimilé [assimilated] being “abandonné, incertain des valeurs qu’il élabore peu à peu et en profondeur se francise” (*Le discours antillais* 202) [isolated, uncertain of [his/her] own values [...] gradually and profoundly becom[ing] more French (202)].

The principles of responsabilization and interdependence are complemented by the principle of relational interdependence, which Glissant and his collaborators present as the basis of their practical notion of “haute politique” [high politics] defined in the *Traité du Grand dérangement* as “un art politique qui installe l’individu, sa relation à l’Autre, au centre d’un projet commun où règne ce que la vie a de plus exigeant, de plus intense et de plus éclatant, et donc de plus sensible à la beauté” (8) [a political art that establishes the be-ing, his relationship to the Other, in the heart of a common project

regulated by what life has of more demanding, more intense, and more sparkling, and therefore more sensitive to beauty].

However, it is crucial to mention that the vision of “high politics” is not an exclusive alternative to the disillusionment within the archipelago. This archipelagic approach derived from the dynamics of the liyannaj revived by the LKP, which originates from the migrant-nu in his reconstitution and reconstruction project, spreads to the world in its totality in a gradual fashion:

La responsabilité collective ouvre à l’interdépendance qui est la marque du tout-monde actuel. Toute responsabilité ouvre d’abord à la lucidité. Et toute lucidité en nos pays ne saurait ouvrir à une déclaration d’indépendance, de rupture ou de séparation, mais à une décision d’interdépendance: interdépendance avec la Caraïbe; interdépendance avec les Amériques; interdépendance avec la France et à travers elle avec l’Europe; enfin l’interdépendance avec le monde. (*Traité du Grand dérangement* 11)

Collective responsibility opens to interdependence, which is the characteristic of the current whole world. Every responsibility opens first and foremost to coherence. And every coherence in our territories would not call for a declaration of independence, rupture or separation, rather it would call for interdependence with the Caribbean archipelago, interdependence with the Americas, interdependence with France and through it with Europe; and finally with the world.

This approach of interdependence is well diagnosed in Glissant's vision of Caribbeanness as demonstrated in the dissertation's introductory chapter with the examination of the dis/similarities between the three main literary canons. In *Le discours antillais*, Glissant signals that the future of the world in general and that of the archipelago in particular depends on the development of a relational politics of interdependence: "La nation n'apparaît pas alors comme l'écho d'un sectarisme, mais comme la promesse d'un partage avec d'autres" (439). [The nation does not then appear as the product of divisiveness, but the promise of a future sharing with others (235).]

In conclusion, Glissant offers a revolutionary look at the two historically troubling events of slavery and colonialism. He values the exceptional work of reconstruction and reconstitution of the migrant-nu by demonstrating how the latter domestically adapts to his "space" in an unpredictable way. Adopting and adapting the latter's exemplary model, Glissant poetically and politically theorizes the archipelagic vision as a perspective that deterritorializes and decenters our systematic and systemic world into a relational world in totality, which guarantees visibility to all its be-ings whether in the West or in the Rest. This archipelagic perspective derived from the rich experiences and legacies of the migrant-nu will be central in his assessment of the particular situation of France in the subsequent chapter, "France Disenfranchising."

CHAPTER III:

FRANCE DISENFRANCHISING

[C]haque être est un composé de vies et de rencontres multiples, un fourmillement avec ses tensions, ses aspirations contraires [...] qui ne peut pas se réduire à cette fiction identitaire nationale.

Michel Lebris et Jean Roaurd eds. *Je est un autre*.

Every being is a mix of lives and multiple encounters, a swarm with its tensions and contrary aspirations [...], which cannot be reduced to this national identitarian fiction.

Michel Lebris et Jean Roaurd eds. *I is another*.

L'identité n'est pas donnée une fois pour toutes, elle se construit et se transforme tout au long de l'existence. Amin Maalouf. *Les identités meurtrières*.

Identity is not given once and for all; it is constructed and transformed over time.

Amin Maalouf. *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*.

In the Introduction of his reference book, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), in which he analyzes the interrelationship between the West and the East, the Colonizers and the Colonized, Edward Said emphasizes that “[t]he world has changed since Conrad and Dickens in ways that have surprised, and often alarmed, metropolitan Europeans and Americans, who now confront large non-white immigrant populations in their midst, and face an impressive roster of newly empowered voices asking for their narrative to be heard” (xx). This observation is well instantiated in Edouard Glissant’s oeuvre since its

central narrative actualizes the “after-effect” of the historical paradigms of slavery and colonialism on the West and the East. Glissant highlights this historical fact with a telling personal narrative at the outset of one of his earliest essays, *Soleil de la conscience*:

Venu de la Martinique (qui est une île de la ceinture caraïbe) et vivant à Paris, me voici huit ans engagé à une solution française: je veux dire que je ne le suis plus seulement parce qu’il est ainsi décidé sur la première page d’un passeport, ni parce qu’il se trouve qu’on m’enseigna cette langue et cette culture, mais encore parce que j’éprouve de plus en plus nécessaire une réalité dont je ne peux pas m’abstenir. (13)

From Martinique (which is an island in the Caribbean belt) and living in Paris, here I am, committed to a French solution for eight years: I do not want to say that I am only committed not because it is marked on the first page of my passport, nor because I was in fact taught this language and this culture, but again because I feel more and more necessary a reality from which I cannot abstain.

Glissant has progressively built on this central theme throughout his literary production, particularly in his more recent essays namely *Quand les murs tombent* and *Mémoires des esclavages*, in which he uses a direct and directing language that addresses explicitly the French in general and the French government in particular on a series of “hot topics” such as immigration and national identity.

This chapter, which focuses on these aspects of his writing, continues my work in the previous chapters by elaborating on the actual effect and affect of the historical paradigms of slavery and colonialism on the French nation presently “occupied” by the

new postcolonial subjects. Achille Mbembe imaginatively captures this new reality in his essay, *Sortir de la grande* (2010) [Coming out of the Deep Night]: “Aujourd’hui la *plantation* et la *colonie* se sont déplacées et ont planté leurs tentes ici-même, hors les murs de la Cité (*en banlieue*)” (94). [Today the *plantation* and the *colony* have moved and set up their tents, exactly here, outside of the walls of the City (in the *suburbs*).]

This chapter analyzes how Glissant responds in a proactive fashion to the current situation of France, caught up in a characteristic dilemma as a nation “une et indivisible” [one and indivisible] and “plurielle et distincte” [plural and distinct] after being “invaded” by its former “subjects.” In other words, I will discuss how Glissant argues for an inevitable shift of France from a “nation state” to what he poetically and politically theorizes as “a nation relation.” How effective and affective are the socio-political strategies developed by the French leadership to accommodate its diverse immigrant populations? How does it de/sacralize the values of the Republic embedded in its tripartite motto: “Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité” [Liberty-Equality-Fraternity]?

To answer these fundamental questions, I will use Glissant’s foundational works on the poetics and politics of identity in correlation with his more recent works, namely *Quand les murs tombent*, an essay written in collaboration with Chamoiseau to appeal for the collapse of the “walls” constructed by Sarkozy’s Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity, and Co-development. I will focus on three main points: the debate on national identity, Glissant’s diagnosis of the problematic nature of the concept of national identity, and his *alternatives* to this French dilemma.

The first part gives a brief history of the politics of immigration developed by the aforementioned Ministry and the reception and responses to this “important question” of

national identity in relation to immigration. It will serve as a contextual background to Glissant's comprehensive assessment of the "émotion du moment" [the emotion of the time] in France to use Tzvetan Todorov's terms in *Les ennemis intimes de la démocratie* (2012) [The Intimate Enemies of Democracy]. The second part analyzes Glissant's reactive response to the debate, focusing particularly on the failures of this political agenda. What is the impact of the French politics of identity and immigration on the immigrant populations and French people at large? What are the real motives behind this political agenda? Finally, the last part presents Glissant's *alternatives* to this status quo. The focus will be on his poetics and politics of identity, his proposition of a relational nation in lieu of nation state through his concept of rhizomatic or relational identity and his redefinition of border for a pluralistic and indivisible France.

THE DEBATE ON NATIONAL IDENTITY

La montagne a accouché d'une souris. Jack Lang on the debate

Much ado about nothing.

Immigration and national identity have always been at the center of the socio-political debates in France. Since the last decade, these questions have caught the attention of the vast majority of the French people, as they have been determinant factors in recent elections from the supreme representations of presidency or parliament to common local assemblies. In his book, *Entre populisme et peopolisme* (2008) [*Between Populism and Peoplism*], Patrick Charadeau argues that the outcome of the 2007 presidential elections is determined by Sarkozy's propagandist focalization on these two political issues at the expense of the Socialist candidate, Ségolène Royal. Sarkozy managed to convince most of the constituents that "[l]a politique de l'immigration, c'est

l'identité de la France dans trente ans.” [The politics of immigration, this is the identity of France within 30 years.] In fact, Sarkozy's instrumentalist use of these questions as “political pledges” was noticeable long before his presidential bid. As Minister of Interior during the Chirac administration,³⁰ Sarkozy presented himself as a committed reviver of a “sacred” French identity, which is supposed to be kept intact from any contamination from “la racaille” [the scum], to use his own term during one of his visits in the suburbs after the memorable 2005 riots.

Such a promise was immediately fulfilled after his election in 2007 with the creation of the aforementioned Ministry under Brice Hortefeux, the main purpose of which is to address these specific questions. Hortefeux was appointed by Sarkozy to control migration flows, encourage development, favor integration, and promote French identity, terms I will analytically evoke throughout the chapter. Over the course of his two-year leadership (2007-2009), Brice Hortefeux had initiated a series of decisive laws that impacted the immigration question at large. One of the memorable laws is “la loi du 20 novembre relative à la maîtrise de l'immigration, à l'intégration et à l'asile” [the law of 20 November relative to the control of immigration, integration and asylum]. In collaboration with a well-known UMP³¹ Member of Parliament, Thierry Mariani, Hortefeux implemented the DNA testing as a requirement for the application for the “regroupement familial” [family regrouping], a law voted on 26 April 1976 during the administration of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing to allow immigrant workers in stable

³⁰ Sarkozy had served two terms as Minister of Interior. From 2002-2004, he was *Ministre de l'Intérieur, de la Sécurité intérieure et des Libertés locales* [Minister of Interior, Interior Security, and Local Liberties]. From 2005-2007, he was *Ministre d'Etat, Ministre de l'Intérieur et de l'Aménagement du territoire* [Minister of State, Minister of Interior and Territorial Administration].

³¹ Stands for *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire* [Union for a Popular Movement]. Sarkozy's ruling party at that time.

condition (job and housing) to welcome their family members in France. Another historic accomplishment associated with the administration of Hortefeux is the increase of the number of deportations of the “sans-papiers” [undocumented immigrants], to about 29,796 in 2007 (Eeckhout Laetitia “Immigration: Le bilan de Brice Hortefeux”) [Eeckhout Laetitia Immigration: The Record of Brice Hortefeux].

On November 2009, under the request of the former President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, Eric Besson, the substitute of Hortefeux, invited the entire French population to partake in the well-publicized debate on national identity. He implemented two main ways to initiate the debate. Via a memorandum, he ordered all local administration representatives to organize local debates throughout the country and created a website (www.debatidentitenationale.fr) to have virtual debates on the main questions of national identity and immigration. The debate was centered on two principal questions: “Pour vous, qu’est-ce qu’être français aujourd’hui?” [In your opinion, what does it mean to be French?] and “Quel est l’apport de l’immigration à l’identité nationale?” [What is the contribution of immigration to national identity?] The memorandum of 2 November 2009 states:

Ce débat répond aussi aux préoccupations soulevées par la résurgence de certains communautarismes, dont l’affaire de la Burqa est l’une des illustrations. Au moment même où l’Union européenne franchit une nouvelle étape de son intégration, et où la crise économique et financière internationale démontre combien la mondialisation rend l’avenir des Nations interdépendant, ce débat a pour objectif d’associer l’ensemble de nos concitoyens à une réflexion de fond sur ce que signifie, en ce début de

21ème siècle, “être français.”

Il doit tout d’abord favoriser la construction d’une vision mieux partagée de ce qu’est l’identité nationale aujourd’hui. Il doit aussi faire émerger, à partir des premières propositions mises en débat et des contributions des participants, des actions permettant de conforter notre identité nationale, et de réaffirmer les valeurs républicaines et la fierté d’être français. (1)

This debate responds also to the preoccupations caused by the resurgence of some forms of communitarianism, among which the Burqa question is one of the illustrations. At the very moment when the European Union passes a new step of its integration, and when international financial and economic crisis demonstrates how much globalization makes the future of Nations interdependent, this debate aims at associating all our fellow citizens to a profound reflection on what it means to “be French” in the beginning of the 21st century.

It should favor the construction of a better-shared vision of what is national identity today. It should generate, from the first debated propositions and contributions of participants, actions that would comfort our national identity and reaffirm the republican values and the pride of being French.

This memorandum is problematic as it explicitly targets the immigrant populations as the perpetrators of communitarianism, which is conceived as a threat to the sacredness of the French national identity. In the memorandum itself, the burqa, a religious sign of the

Islamic faith, is instrumentalized as a specified example of a threatening form of communitarianism.³² In campaigning against the immigrant populations in general and the Muslims in particular, Sarkozy portrays himself as a “protector” of the French nation, the citizens of which are stricken by what Alain Badiou calls “un sentiment de peur” [a feeling of fear] in his interview with Frédéric Taddéi:

[L]’avenir de la France est incertain. Nous ne savons pas où va ce pays. Il (Sarkozy) sait qu’il a un grand passé mais il doute qu’il ait un grand avenir. Et ça crée un sentiment de peur, un sentiment de refermement, une demande de protection et Sarkozy est un des noms de ce phénomène. Le vote pour Sarkozy est une demande de protection.

The future of France is uncertain. We do not know where the country is going? He (Sarkozy) knows that it has a great past but he doubts that it has a great future. And this creates a feeling of fear; a feeling of closeness, a request for protection and Sarkozy is indeed one of the names of such a phenomenon. The vote for Sarkozy is a request for protection.

A question worth asking is whether communitarianism is not created or favored by an established politics of city planning. The geographic occupation of the French capital city, Paris, reveals a very communitarian-oriented settlement. Immigrant populations are placed far away from the city center, in the ZEP,³³ located at the periphery of the city. In her article on “Continents and Archipelagoes,” Françoise Lionnet

³² See Achille Mbembe’s *Sortir de la grande nuit*. He condemns how the Sarkozy’s administration has publicized communitarianism as a characteristic stigma of the immigrants in general and the Muslim community in particular. See chapter 3: “Société française: Proximité sans réciprocité” [French Society: Proximity without Reciprocity].

³³ ZEP stands for Zone d’Education Prioritaire [Area of Priority Education]. It is initiated in 1981 by the French government under the management of the Ministry of Education to help financially and logistically schools located in the suburbs to have more suitable programs to the needs of the areas.

argues that there has been a “gradual ghettoization of housing projects erected in the peripheries of France’s large cities” (1504). The 18th arrondissement is a perfect example of this observation as it has a large concentration of immigrants from the African continent.

This reality is well captured in the film of Laurent Cantet, *Entre les murs* (2008) [The Class], an adaptation of François Bégaudeau’s novel published two years earlier in 2006, which bears the same title. In this popular film, Cantet presents a ZEP middle-school classroom in the 20th arrondissement, in which a vast majority of students are of immigrant parents. In one scene, he exposes the lively discussions among these underprivileged students on important questions of immigration and education and more importantly the sense of belonging to the French nation. Almost all the students of immigrant descent feel marginalized by the national system and question “la fierté d’être français” [the pride of being French], as highlighted in the memorandum.

This memorandum on the debate on national is accompanied by a “Guide pour la conduite des débats locaux” [Local Debates Guide] on the fundamental questions mentioned earlier. The first question on identity “In your opinion, what does it mean to be French today?” is subdivided in different categories such as: elements (universalism, language, patriotism etc....), symbols (flag, the national anthem, Marianne etc....), and values (democracy, secularism, equality etc....). On the issue of immigration, many questions are posed, among which: “Pourquoi accueillir des ressortissants étrangers dans notre République, puis dans notre communauté nationale?” [Why do we welcome immigrant populations in our Republic, then in our national community?] and “Pourquoi intégrer des ressortissants étrangers dans notre République, puis dans notre communauté

nationale?” [Why do we integrate immigrant populations in our Republic, then in our community?] As is evident in these questions, immigration is the complex target of the debate all the more because almost all the questions revolve around it. In *Africa and France* (2012), Dominic Thomas notes, “Immigration today has come to concern both facets of the term, the control of external factors (migration, border control, security) and the internal dynamic of ethnic and race relations, integration and multiculturalism” (7).

Surprisingly enough for the Sarkozy camp, the debate did not attract many participants either online or locally. Instead, it offered more questions than answers and fostered a climate of unease nationally and internationally. The caricature from the famous French daily newspaper *Libération* below satirically explains the outcome of the national debate:

Figure 1: Debate Caricatured by *Libération*



On a more serious note, the editorial page of *Le Monde* in its 16 December 2012 edition summarizes the general perception on the debate by the vast majority of the population: “La discussion a été engagée sur une base dangereuse en associant [...] identité nationale et immigration.” [The discussion was engaged on a dangerous basis by associating [...] national identity and immigration.] In lieu of inclusiveness, it fostered a sense of exclusiveness and betrayal of the principles of the Republic, the constitution of which values diversity and community for all, as is stipulated in the first article:

La France est une république, indivisible, laïque,³⁴ démocratique et sociale. Elle assure l'égalité devant la loi de tous les citoyens sans distinction d'origine, de race ou de religion. Elle respecte toutes les croyances. Son organisation est décentralisée.

France is an indivisible, secular, democratic and social republic. It ensures equality of all citizens before the law without distinction of origin, race or religion. It respects all beliefs. Its structuration is decentralized.

The debate became an exclusive prerogative of the French political leaders from the Right to the Left. One of the most critical responses came from the former vice-president and current president of the Front National [National Front], Marine Le Pen, who critically describes Besson's initiative as a “meaningless enterprise” during her 4 November 2009 address on national identity, in which she calls for “Pour une République VRAIMENT Française” [For a TRUE French Republic]. She argues that the Sarkozy's administration is identical to that of its predecessors (the Socialist's) because it progressively makes the “Français de souche” [pure French] foreigners in their own land.

³⁴ Laïcité [Secularism], which basically insures separation of state and religious institution, has been one of the most controversially debated principles in France.

She denounces the mechanistic organization of the debate by Sarkozy and Besson, which confiscates and censures some of the most faithful and truest comments made by ordinary citizens. As an alternative to this “confiscating debate,” she invites the “pure” French to express their opinions and feelings on a more “open” website.³⁵

On a different tone from the Left, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of the Parti de gauche [Left Party], regrets the “lepenisation” of the debate stating in his blog that: “Est Français, celui qui a une carte nationale français. Point.”³⁶ [Is French anyone who has a French national identity card. That’s it.] Mélenchon is one of the greatest rivals of the Front National because of his “loose” views on immigration. His detractors portray him as the anti-Republican whose model is “le degré zéro de la République” [Republic zero degree]. He rejects the anti-immigration laws that are in favor of deportation and pleads for the facilitation to the path to citizenship of immigrants.

Among writers and theorists, the reactions were far from being flattering. One of the most popular names interviewed by the media is Tzvetan Todorov, a Franco-Bulgarian writer who has worked intensely on current socio-politically issues in the world in general and in France in particular in essays like *Le nouveau désordre mondial* (2006) [New World Disorder], *La peur des barbares* (2008) [The Fear of Barbarians], and *Les ennemis intimes de la démocratie* (2012) [The Intimate Enemies of Democracy]. In his interview with Laurent Marchand of the blog Ouest France in 2010 on multiculturalism, Tzvetan Todorov regrets the sentiment of resentment towards the immigrant populations detonated by the debate: “Ce qui nous est familier est cher. Nous

³⁵ www.identitenationale.net. This website was created by the Front National pour l’Unité Française [National Front for French Uniqueness].

³⁶ Mélenchon accuses the Sarkozy of adopting the fear-mongering politics of the National Front in order to get more votes from the Far Right.

c'est bien, les étrangers c'est mal. C'est quand même assez primitif comme manière de voir" [What is familiar to us is dear. We are good, the strangers are bad. This is all the same a very primitive way of thinking.]

Besides Todorov, another great example in the literary community that has critically assessed French politics of identity is the great French historian of colonialism and immigration, Pascal Blanchard. In his contribution entitled "L'identité, l'historien et le passé colonial: le trio impossible" [Identity, the Historian and the Colonial Past: An Impossible Trio] in the manifesto *Je est un autre: identité-monde* (2010), he questions the initiative by reformulating Besson's question:

La question n'est pas qu'est-ce qu'être français? Mais bien la place de la citoyenneté de ceux que l'on désigne comme des 'minorités visibles' et qui sont les héritiers de ce passé colonial (les indigènes d'hier peuvent-ils être des citoyens aujourd'hui?). (125-126)

The question is not what does it mean to be French? But rather the place of citizenship of those designated as 'visible minorities' and who are the inheritors of this colonial past (Can the Indigenous people of yesterday be citizens today?).

Blanchard's question is similar to Glissant's response to the debate on national identity as he puts the immigrant populations at the heart of his poetic and political argument in *Quand les murs tombent*, an essay exclusively consecrated to this eventful matter.

GLISSANT'S DIAGNOSIS

In the aforementioned essay, Glissant capitalizes on the creation of Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity, and Co-development and the debate launched by the latter to make a comprehensive diagnosis of the failures of the political systems of France and the West by extension. In his argument, he discusses the West not as a mere referential place but rather as a project or an essence: “L’Occident n’est pas à l’ouest. Ce n’est pas un lieu, c’est un projet” (*Le discours antillais* 12). [The West is not in the West. It is a project, not a place (2).] In order to comprehend in a retrospective and prospective way Glissant’s approach on national identity and immigration, it is important to analyze how he has described the project of the West from his earliest works to his late ones.

In both his fictional and non-fictional works, Glissant characterizes the project as an abusive and sectarian model that favors the One to the detriment of the group, the relational multiple. In one of his earliest essays, *L’intention poétique* (1969) [The Poetic Intention], for instance, he defines it as follows: “L’Un est harmonique; il est plein de lui-même et suffit comme un dieu à nourrir ses rêves” (13). [The One is standardized; it is full of itself and suffices as a god to feed its dreams.] He exposes the project of the One, in opposition to that of the Relational, as a form of “repli identitaire” [introverted assertion of one’s identity] that negates the other, the immigrant.

Deleuze and Guattari make a symbolically clear-cut distinction between these two models, namely the One (the tree/arborescent) and the Multiple (the rhizome/rhizomatic) in *Mille Plateaux* [A Thousand Plateaus]: “L’arbre est filiation, mais le rhizome est alliance, uniquement d’alliance. L’arbre impose le verbe “être,” mais le rhizome a pour tissu la conjonction ‘et...et...et...’ Il y a dans cette conjonction assez de force pour

déraciner le verbe être” (86).³⁷ [The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb ‘to be,’ but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction ‘and...and...and...’ This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb to be (25).]

At the very outset of his discussion of the problematic nature of the debate on national identity in *Quand les murs tombent*, Glissant denounces the absurdity and the closed nature of the conception of the exclusive One, which he denominates as “fixité identitaire” [identitarian fixation]:

[N]ulle part on ne rencontre de fixité identitaire [...] Un peuple ou un individu peuvent être attentifs au mouvement de leur identité, mais ne peuvent en décider par avance, au moyen de préceptes et de postulats. On ne saurait gérer un ministère de l’identité. Sinon la vie de la collectivité deviendrait une mécanique, son avenir aseptisé, rendu infertile par des régies fixes, comme dans une expérience de laboratoire. (1)

[N]owhere can we meet identitarian fixation [...] A person or a people can be attentive to the movement of their identity, but cannot decide it in advance, through instruction and assumption. We cannot manage a Ministry of identity. Otherwise the life of the group would be mechanical, its future aseptic, made sterile by the fixated regulations like a laboratory experience.

In the document on the guidelines of the debate on national identity, there is an implicit rejection of the cultures of the immigrants for a divine national culture, as

³⁷ In this quotation Deleuze and Guattari make a distinction between the rhizome and the tree via auxiliary *être* [to be] and the conjunction *et* [and]. *Est* [is] conjugated in the present tense, third singular pronoun and *Et* [and] have a fairly similar pronunciation.

exemplified by Sarkozy's persistent appeal to the immigrant populations "à se fondre à la culture nationale" [to melt into the national culture]. Glissant defines Sarkozy's conceptualization of national culture as the "culture de la nation" [culture of the nation] exceptionally embedded in the nation's past glory as argued by some of the French media over the course of the ongoing debate on national identity. In its edition of 7 October 2010, *Le Nouvel Observateur* for instance talks about "Sarkozy et sa vitrine historique de l'identité nationale" [Sarkozy and his historical showcase of national identity] and *Le Louvre pour tous* highlights one of Sarkozy's most explicit campaign speeches³⁸ on national culture "La culture selon Sarkozy" [Culture according to Sarkozy]:

La France ce n'est pas une page blanche. C'est un pays qui s'est forgé au cours des siècles une identité, une personnalité qu'il faut respecter, qu'on ne peut pas effacer, qu'on ne peut pas ignorer, [...] qui est faite de mille apports, de commémorations, de leçons d'instituteurs, de réminiscences qui se transmettent de génération en génération, de souvenirs d'enfance, de vieilles histoires de grands-pères qui ont fait la guerre et qui racontent à leur tour à leurs petits-enfants ce que leurs grands-pères leur ont raconté jadis.

France it is not a blank page. It is a nation that has shaped itself over centuries an identity, a personality that must be respected, which cannot be erased, which cannot be ignored [...] which is made of thousands of contributions, commemorations, teachers' lessons, reminiscences passed on from generation to generation, childhood memories, ancient stories of

³⁸ This speech was delivered in Metz on 17 May 2012.

old war veterans who retell their grandchildren what their grandfathers told them before.

This quotation, which demonstrates the foundations of culture in Sarkozy's sense, reveals that the whole initiative of the debate on national identity is not only a motive to immortalize the glorious past but also to alienate the immigrant populations regarded as a "menace à l'identité nationale" [a threat to national identity] and "traîtres à la nation" [traitors to the nation] to paraphrase the populist movements in France. Sarkozy ignores the common past that France shares with its former colonies, the places of origin of most of its immigrant populations. In his article, "Le racisme des intellectuels" (2012) [Racism of Intellectuals], Alain Badiou depicts France as a "nation retardataire" [backward nation] all the more because it is nostalgic of its past, failing therefore to responsibly face the new realities prevailing in our current hard times.

In his deconstruction of the identitarian discourse of the Sarkozy administration, Glissant argues that there is a perpetuation of the colonial model in the treatment of the immigration question. Even though he recognizes that the fundamental characteristic of colonialism is economy, he argues that identity is its distinctive feature par excellence: "Même si toute colonisation est d'abord exploitation économique, aucune ne peut se passer de cette survalorisation identitaire qui justifie l'exploitation" (*Quand les murs tombent* 3). [Even if every form of colonialism is first and foremost economic, none can do without this identity overvaluing, which justifies exploitation.] During a roundtable discussion on "Richesses et dérives de l'identité" [Identity Richness and Drift], Glissant reminds the past colonial attitudes and tactics vis-à-vis the identities of the colonized: "Toutes les colonisations ont tenté de renforcer, d'abaisser, d'annihiler les identités des

peuples qui étaient en proie aux colonisations” (*Poétiques d’Edouard Glissant* 323). [All forms of colonialism tried to reinforce, degrade, annihilate the identities of the people who were prey to colonialism.]

This perpetuation of the colonial model vis-à-vis the “indigenous” is manifested through a current political regulation or rather deregulation inspired by the well-known establishment system of “divide and rule,” which closely fragments the modern French society into two main categories, the “Français de souche” and the “immigrant French.” In addition to these two categories, the politics of immigration of the Sarkozy administration creates subdivisions within the immigrant populations in its promotion of *immigration choisie* [Selective immigration], called by Glissant “immigration à la valeur” [immigration to the value], as opposed to *immigration subie* [inflicted immigration], which favors highly skilled immigrants over the vast majority of the immigrant populations. Some social groups such as “Le Collectif Sans Papiers” [The Collective of Undocumented Workers] and other organizations such as “Groupe d’Information et de Soutien aux Immigrés” [Group of Information and Support to Immigrants] joined forces under the federation “unis contre l’immigration jetable” [united against disposable immigration] to fight this divisive project, which reduces immigration to the sole purpose of labor force.

In his book entitled *A quoi sert l’identité nationale?* (2007) [What is the use of National Identity?], Gérard Noiriel analyzes how this politics of divisiveness has engendered “un vocabulaire de menaces” [vocabulary of threats] in France with the emergence of violence charged words such as delinquency, zero tolerance, incivility, and scum, as imminently illustrated by the 2005 suburban riots, which culminated in a

declaration of state of emergency in November 2005. Sarkozy himself, Minister of the Interior at that time, admitted that these riots resulted from the failure of the Chirac administration to establish a strong politics of immigration: “Les Français savent que les violences qui ont éclaté dans nos banlieues à l’automne dernier ne sont pas sans rapport avec l’échec de la politique d’immigration et d’intégration.” [The French know fully well that these violent acts in our suburbs last fall are directly linked to a failure of a politics of immigration and integration.]

This divisiveness marginalizes the majority of Black and Beurs in all spheres of power and decision-making. David Blatt’s contribution entitled “Immigrant Politics in a Republican Nation” in *Post-Colonial Cultures in France* (1997) states:

[I]n the political arena, ethnic minorities have had limited success in establishing a recognized presence. Although immigration is at the very center of political conflict in France, as actors, ethnic minorities remain on the periphery of the political process. (40)

One may argue that the Sarkozy administration has offered influential cabinet positions to Rama Yade, Rachida Dati, and Fadela Amara, who are respectively of Senegalese, Moroccan/Algerian, and Algerian descents. While the first was appointed Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Human Rights, the second was not only Sarkozy’s spokeswoman during his 2007 presidential bid but also his Minister of Justice, and the last one the Secretary of State for Urban Policies. Although some immigration organizations expressed some sense of appreciation for these nominations as a way to enhance diversity and inclusion of the minorities on a national basis, the general

perception was mostly skeptical. These political leaders were portrayed as “puppets” used by the Sarkozy administration to mask its anti-immigration rhetoric.

In *Les ennemis intimes de la démocratie*, Todorov deplores the sole use and abuse of the immigration for political gains: “Les termes du débat (sur l’immigration et le multiculturalisme) sont choisis, non en fonction des besoins vitaux de la population, mais de façon à pouvoir s’attirer la sympathie de certains électeurs” (209). [The terms of the debate (on immigration and multiculturalism) are chosen not according to vital needs of the population, but in a manner to possibly attract the sympathy of certain constituents.] In the same vein, Badiou condemns generally the political approach to what he calls “le problème immigré” [the immigrant problem] in his aforementioned article: “Honte aux gouvernements successifs, qui ont tous rivalisé sur les thèmes conjoints de la sécurité et du “problème immigré,” pour que ne soit pas trop visible qu’ils servaient avant tout les intérêts de l’oligarchie économique!” [Shame on the successive governments, which have all competed on the interconnected themes of security and the immigrant question as a mask to the fact that they served beforehand the interests of economic oligarchy!]

By way of illustration of both remarks by Todorov and Badiou, it is noticeable that the far Right political party, the National Front, adapts an instrumentalist anti-immigrant rhetoric to gain the sympathy of “Français de souche.” There is a “surprising” surge of popularity of Marine Le Pen’s party during the last presidential elections. They arrived at the third position in terms of popular votes during the first round (17.90%), after Sarkozy’s UMP (27.28%), and Hollande’s PS (28.63%). These numbers are but a confirmation of the previous presidential elections in 2002 when her father, Jean-Marie

Le Pen came second with (16%), after Jacques Chirac (20%) and before Lionel Jospin (15%) in the first round of the elections.

Recently, there has been an urge for a sense of nationalism from the extreme Right to the Right political parties. As mentioned in the introductory part of the chapter, most of the questions premised in the debate guidelines revolve around the notions of nation, nationhood, and Etat-nation [nation-state]. The French nation is conceptually framed as a “fortress and landmass, the borders of which must be protected at all costs” (Lionnet 1508), hence the recurrence of the word “border” in the agenda of those political parties. During one of his campaign speeches for his last presidential campaign in Toulouse, Sarkozy made immigration in general and the notion of the border at the center of his agenda: “La frontière est au cœur du problème de l’immigration, au cœur du problème économique, au cœur du problème de la réciprocité, au cœur de la lutte contre les dumpings, au cœur du problème fiscal, au cœur de la lutte contre les trafics” (*Libération politique* 29 April 2012). [The border is at the crux of the problem of immigration, the problem of economy, the problem of reciprocity, the fight against dumpings, the fiscal problem, the fight against trafficking.]

Glissant rejects the closed and closing French nation model and its focalization on the securing of borders. In his assessment of the disillusionment in the postcolony, Glissant regrets the reproduction of the nation state model by the assimilated political leadership: “Le schème de l’Etat-nation s’est ainsi multiplié dans le monde. Il n’en est résulté que des désastres” (*Quand les murs tombent* 3). [Thus the schema of nation state propagated throughout the world. It only brought about disasters.] Among the disasters,

he enumerates the notion of empire, colonial expansion, genocides, slavery to name but a few.

In his illustration of the legacies of the colonial nation model, Glissant refers to the project of Francophonie and its assimilative platform. In *Une nouvelle région du monde* (2006), he devotes an entire chapter on this particular issue, “Francophonie points de suspension, points d’interrogation” [Francophonie Suspension Marks, Question Marks]. He demonstrates how Francophonie is a closed project, which follows the One model in order to guarantee the visibility of the colonial power: “Et les anciennes puissances coloniales partagent ce penchant à rassembler autour d’elles les restes de leur entreprise, surtout sur le plan manœuvrable des cultures, de la langue et des autres moyens d’expression” (169). [And the ancient colonial powers share this tendency to gather around themselves the remnants of their enterprise, mostly in the maneuverable framework of cultures, language and other means of expression.] Francophonie has struggled to maintain the politics of close relationship between France and its “other worlds.”

In his blog posted on 5 August 2013, “Chroniques de Gorgui Dieng” [Chronicles of Gorgui Dieng], published by Senenews, the Senegalese writer deplores the politics of “Francophonie à double vitesses” [Francophonie double-speed] in his contribution, “Crise de l’école sénégalaise: La rupture linguistique”³⁹ [Crisis in the Senegalese School System: Linguistic Break]. Elaborating on the connections between Francophonie and immigration, Dieng notes an evident paradox: “Parlez français et adoptez la culture mais

³⁹ See also his novel *A Leap Out of the Dark* (2002), in which he analyzes the question of language in Postcolonial Africa through the dis/connections between Wolof, French, and English.

ne mettez pas les pieds en France.” [Speak French and adopt the culture but do not set foot in France.]

France and the West in general are responsible of immigration because they have maintained the colonial system of inequality between colonizers and colonized. In other words, they have created the need for underprivileged populations to leave their countries at all costs. In his documentary, *Barcelona or Barsakh* (2011) [Barcelona or the Grave], Levine Hank captures how the needy former colonized populations are ready to risk their lives in order to join the European Eldorado.⁴⁰ Glissant exposes the real causes of immigration in *Quand les murs tombent*: “C’est vrai que, dans ce ‘monde-marché,’ ce ‘marché-monde,’ les dépressions entre pénurie et abondance suscitent des flots migratoires intenses, comme des cyclones qu’aucune frontière ne saurait endiguer” (6-7). [It is true that, in this ‘world market,’ this ‘market-world,’ the depressions between poverty and prosperity lead to large migration flows, like cyclones which no border can contain.]

In the debate on national identity and immigration, the Sarkozy administration overlooks these aforementioned causes as they politically instrumentalize the question of immigration. In his aforementioned book, Todorov gives a historically comprehensive background on immigration and the West to demonstrate the manipulative politics of fear mongering:

La transformation du paysage politique s’est accélérée depuis la fin de la guerre froide, comme si la vie publique d’un pays avait besoin d’un adversaire repoussoir, et qu’après la disparition du rival communiste, la

⁴⁰ Barsakh is an Arabic word adopted in Wolof, which means the life of the Grave. In fact the candidates to immigration commonly use the expression Barça wala Barsakh (a play on word) [Barça or Barsakh].

population devait fixer ses peurs, ses inquiétudes ou ses rejets sur un autre groupe quelconque. Ce sont les étrangers, surtout s'ils sont musulmans, ce qui entraînera des poussées de xénophobie et d'islamophobie. (183)

The transformation of the political landscape has drastically changed since the end of the cold war, as if the actual public life of a country needed a foil enemy, and that after the disappearance of the communist rival, the population must fixate their fears, their worries or their rejections on another group. That group is the strangers, mostly if they are Muslims, which led to progressive manifestations of xenophobia and islamophobia.

Glissant uses the terms highlighted by Todorov to denunciate Sarkozy's Ministry, which he references as the "mur de l'identité" [the wall of identity] in its implementation of "une politique raciste, xénophobe, populiste jusqu'à consternation" (*Quand les murs tombent* 11) [a politics of racism, xenophobia, populism to consternation].

Moreover, Glissant deciphers the constituting terms of the Ministry title itself to demonstrate how the French leadership betrays two inseparable fundamentals of its history, namely colonialism and the exaltation of freedom for all as stipulated in the constitution mentioned earlier in my argument of the paradoxical connection between the official memorandum and the first article of the constitution: "Ainsi, en plein XXI^e siècle, une grande démocratie, une vieille République, terre dite des droits de l'homme, rassemble dans l'intitulé d'un ministère appelé en premier lieu à la répression: les termes immigration, intégration, identité nationale, codéveloppement" (5). [So, in the heart of the 21st century, a great democracy, an old Republic, a so-called land of human rights, gathers in the title of a ministry for first and foremost repression: terms of immigration,

integration, national identity and co-development.] The promotion of this Ministry and its debate on national identity has created more problems than solutions. Therefore the treatment of this question of immigration necessitates an active awareness and collaboratively collective participation. Glissant and Chamoiseau launch a strong signal in the conclusion of their essay, *Quand les murs tombent*:

Nous demandons que toutes les forces humaines d’Afrique, d’Asie, des Amériques, que tous les peuples sans Etats, tous les “républicains,” tous les tenants des “droits de l’homme,” les habitants des plus petits pays, les insulaires, et les errants des archipels autant que les traceurs de continents [...] élèvent par toutes les formes possibles, une protestation contre ce mur ministère. (25-26)

We demand that all human forces of Africa, Asia, the Americas, that all the peoples without nations, all the “republicans,” all the upholders of “human rights,” the inhabitants of smaller countries, the islanders, the nomads of the archipelago as well as the tracers of the continents to protest against this Ministry wall by all means necessary.

Glissant does not limit the essay in just enumerating all the problems created by the Sarkozy administration. Instead, he opens some vistas as *alternatives* to move France from a nation-state to a nation-relation.

GLISSANT’S *ALTERNATIVES*

In *Quand les murs tombent*, Glissant’s principal challenge set to the French leadership in general and the Sarkozy administration in particular is the transformation of the French republic from a nation state to a nation relation or relational nation. This move

is all the more crucial because the world has been inescapably becoming a “*Kay tout moun*,” a world in its totality perceived as “la maison de tous, [qui] appartient à tous et [dont] l’équilibre passe par l’équilibre de tous” (7) [the house of all, [which] belongs to all the stability [of which] depends on the stability of all]. Based on the archipelagic model developed in the second chapter of this dissertation, “The Archipelagic Exception,” the relational nation is as inclusive and heterogeneous as “an entity that connects disparate islands” (Lionnet 1508).

To better comprehend Glissant’s theorization of the relational nation, it is crucial to analyze the fundamental basis of the notion of Relation in his oeuvre. In other words, it is important to situate the notion of Relation within the larger picture of Glissant’s literary paradigm of Antillanité, the basis of his poetics and politics of Relation argued mainly in *Le discours antillais* and *Poétique de la Relation*. As already analyzed in the first chapter of this dissertation, “Redefining Black Experience in Edouard Glissant’s Poetics,” Antillanité is a redefinition of a new identity and personality framed and deep-rooted within the realms of the Caribbean archipelago, the characteristics of which are “impermanence, instability and hybridity.” It revives the histories of the archipelago and values a syncretism of languages, cultures, traditions, and heritages. It is a poetic and political ideology that is the most adaptable and descriptive model because it guarantees visibility to the different components of the Caribbean populations, namely the Whites, Creoles, Indians, and Blacks among others.

Glissant’s relational nation is but an important particle of his *kay tout moun*, a sort of “lieu incontournable” [inescapable place], which transcends the classical notion of nation state, and in which the inhabitants imaginatively project themselves onto a global

scale: “Nous n’appartenons pas en exclusivité à des “patries,” à des “nations” et pas du tout à des “territoires” mais désormais à des “lieux”... [qui sont] incontournables, qui entrent en relation avec tous les lieux du monde” (*Quand les murs tombent* 16-17). [We do not exclusively belong to “homelands,” “nations” and not at all to “territories” but henceforth to “places”... [that are] inescapable, which enter in relation with all the places of the world.] Glissant stresses that this relational place is regulated by the commitment of every inhabitant to first and foremost free themselves from the divisive “marqueurs archaïques” [archaic barriers] such as race, language, religion, and nationality. He posits the post-Apartheid South Africa under the leadership of Nelson Mandela as a potential example of a relational nation:

Il nous semble que seule l’Afrique du Sud libérée de l’Apartheid a exprimé la nécessité d’une organisation volontairement métisse, d’un idéal de l’échange, qui ne serait pourtant pas régi par des décrets ou des arrêtés ministériels, où les Noirs, les Zoulous, les Blancs, les Métis, les Indiens pourraient vivre ensemble, sans domination ni conflits: la vocation d’une identité relation, qui irait plus loin que la simple juxtaposition d’ethnies ou de cultures qu’on appelle maintenant multiculturalisme. (3-4)

It seems that only South Africa free from Apartheid has expressed the necessity of a voluntarily mixed organization, of an ideal of exchange, which would not be nonetheless governed par decrees or ministerial orders, where Blacks, Zulus, Whites, Mixed, Indians could live together, with neither domination nor conflicts: the vocation of a relational identity,

which would go further than the simple juxtaposition of ethnic groups called multiculturalism.

In mentioning South Africa and its history of Apartheid, Glissant gestures at an unconsidered point in the debate on the question of immigration and national identity in France. Unlike South Africa, France did not reconsider and redefine the history of slavery and colonialism in the elaboration of its general History. In his indictment, Glissant urges the French leadership to adopt a more holistic perspective in the assessment of its History by bridging the gap between its positive and negative parts, its shadows and lights (*Quand les murs tombent* 24). In *Mémoires des esclavages*, he argues specifically that the educational system in the fields of history and geography in France must revise its curriculum by incorporating these shadows exercised in the territories of its current “invaders.”

As suggested in the last part of the aforementioned quotation, the emergence of relational nations is dependent upon the development of the relational or rhizome identity, which is in sharp contrast with the single root identity, the label of the nation state. In *L'intraitable beauté du monde*, Glissant distinguishes these two types of identity: “L’identité relation remplit l’espace et la pensée de l’archipel, elle ne tue pas autour d’elle comme fait l’identité à racine unique, elle trame ses racines solidaires qui vont à la rencontre de l’autre et se renforcent mutuellement” (55). [The relational identity fills the space and the archipelagic thought, it does not kill anything around it like the single root identity, it weaves its united roots towards the other and mutually reinforces each other.] The rhizome or relational identity is the adaptable and adoptable form of identity that is in phase with the current situation of France comprised of diverse communities

throughout the globe. Besides, it opens up practical avenues for the implementation of the theoretical ideals embedded in the French republican model inscribed in the motto, “liberty, equality and fraternity,” breaking thus free from any form of communitarianism.

Glissant uses theoretically the notion of relation in general and the relational identity in particular as a poetic and political motive to deconstruct the classical conceptualization of the worlds in a dualistic and antagonistic fashion. It demarcates from the well-established polarizing categories: White/Black, Colonizer/Colonized, Self/other.

In *Introduction à une poétique du divers*, Glissant clearly presents his project:

[L]es humanités d’aujourd’hui abandonnent difficilement quelque chose à quoi elles s’obstinent depuis longtemps, à savoir que l’identité d’un être n’est valable que si elle est exclusive de tous les autres êtres possibles. Et c’est cette mutation douloureuse de la pensée humaine que je voudrais dépister avec vous. (15-16)

Today’s humanities abandon difficultly something which they have been preserving for a long time, that is to say, that the identity of someone is only valid if it is exclusive of all the possible others. And it is this sensible transformation of human thought that I would like to track down with you.

Glissant’s transformation of this exclusive orientation into an inclusive one confers a preponderant place to the Other. In other words, it establishes an interrelational dialogue between the Self and the Other, in which each part sees himself or herself into the other. It is a democratic system defined by Mbembe in his aforementioned book as “la possibilité d’identification à l’autre” [the possibility of identification to the other]. This alternative is a viable proposition that creates a more welcoming atmosphere in which

each citizen succeeds “à penser l’autre, à se penser avec l’autre, à penser l’autre en soi” (*Quand les murs tombent* 7) [think the other, think the self and other together, think the other in the self]. The Other is therefore the “necessary partner of the self” (*Edouard Glissant* 179). This dialectically interrelational partnership is well examined by Chamoiseau in *Écrire en pays dominé* (1997) [Writing in a Dominated Land]:

L’Autre me change et je le change. Son contact m’anime et je l’anime. Et ces déboîtements nous offrent des angles de survie, et nous descellent et nous amplifient. Chaque Autre devient une composante de moi tout en restant distinct. Je deviens ce que je suis dans mon appui ouvert sur l’Autre. Et cette relation à l’Autre m’ouvre en cascades d’innombrables relations à tous les Autres, une multiplication qui fonde l’unité et la force de chaque individu. (202)

The Other changes me and I change him. His contact animates me and I animate him. And these slippings give us angles of survival, and unseal and amplify us. Every Other becomes a component of the self while remaining distinct. I become what I am in my open support to the Other. And this relationship with the Other opens me in infinite cascades of relationships with all the Others, a multiplication that creates the unity and strength of each individual.

Glissant’s relational identity as an alternative to the French dilemma demonstrates that immigration is not a mere productive labor force. Rather, it is a socio-cultural phenomenon that enriches the relational nation in all aspects of its life.

The other important characteristic of relational identity is its dynamic and enriching nature through the negotiating power of change and exchange. In *Quand les murs tombent*, Glissant reassures people and nations that “[c]hanger en échangeant revient à s’enrichir au haut sens du terme et non à se perdre. Il en est ainsi pour un individu comme pour une nation” (19). [[C]hanging by exchanging amounts to enriching oneself in the high sense of the word, not to get lost. This is as true for a person as for a nation.] Relational identity is not static because the self, who is defined not as an *être* [being] but an *étant* [be-ing],⁴¹ is in constant flux in time and space. This concept of the *étant* is a defining feature of Glissant’s literary paradigm of Antillanité defined earlier. In *Introduction à une poétique du Divers*, he rejects the literary paradigm of Negritude, which visualizes the world and its people under Western eyes:

Ce que je reprochais à la négritude, c’était de définir l’être: l’être nègre...

Je crois qu’il n’y a plus d’“être.” L’être, c’est une grande, noble et incommensurable invention de l’Occident, et en particulier de la philosophie grecque [...] Je crois qu’il faut dire qu’il n’y a plus que l’étant, c’est-à-dire des existences particulières qui correspondent, qui entrent en conflit, et qu’il faut abandonner la prétention à la définition de l’être. (125)

⁴¹ *Étant* is the gerund form of the verb être [to be]. Both *être* and *étant* are normally translated as being. But to demonstrate the progressive changing nature of the being, Glissant uses the gerund form. To make a difference between these two forms, I translate *étant* as be-ing with a dash to highlight the progressive nature of the being.

See also Chamoiseau’s definition of *étant* in *Ecrire en pays dominé*. “Quand on a élu en soi l’idée de créolisation, on ne commence pas à *être*, on se met soudain à *exister*, à exister à la manière d’un vent qui souffle, et qui mêle terre, mer, ciel senteur, et toutes les qualités...” (204). [When when we have elected in ourselves the idea of creolization, we do not start to be, we suddenly exist, existing like a wind that blows and mixes earth, sea, sky, scent, and all qualities...]]

My reproach to Negritude was to define the being: the Negro being. I think there is no longer any being. The being is a big, noble and incommensurable invention of the West, and in particular Greek philosophy. [...] I think that we should say there is only the be-ing, that is to say particular existences that correspond, that enter in conflict, and that we should abandon the pretention to define the being.

Glissant's notion of the be-ing in constant flux is echoed in the manifesto *Je est un autre* in the different contributions on the notion of "identité-monde" [world identity], the most remarkable of which is Ananda Devi's "Flou identitaire" [Identitarian Blur]. In this chapter, Devi defines identity as a sort of "asymptote," the quest of which is unpredictable and progressively uncontrolled and uncontrollable because it develops over space and time:

L'identité est comme un ensemble de vêtements que nous portons au cours de notre vie. Vous souhaitez, vous, nous faire porter un uniforme. Vous savez pourtant combien les uniformes sont dangereux! Je veux pouvoir changer de vêtement et même de peau, ne jamais être la même parce que je m'ennuierais, et ne pas me retrancher derrière des barbelés symboliques qui me sépareraient des autres. Je refuse les murs réels ou métaphoriques.
(184)

Identity is like an outfit that you wear throughout your life. You do expect us to wear a uniform. You know how dangerous uniforms can be! I want to be able to change my outfits and even my appearance, to never be the same because I would find it boring, and I do not want to have to take up

position behind some symbolic barbed-wire that would separate me from others. I refuse to accept real or metaphorical walls.

Both Glissant and Devi are against any form of integration in the Sarkozian sense of the word as suggested in his expressive call to “se fondre dans la communauté nationale” [melt into national community]. This global or universal community is detrimental to the different “minor” cultures as it is but “the self representation of the dominant particular.” (Stuart Hall 67). Glissant defines this classical form of integration as: “une verticale orgueilleuse qui réclame hautainement la désintégration de ce qui vient vers nous, et donc l’appauvrissement de soi” (*Quand les murs tombent* 23) [an arrogant vertical which claims with haughtiness the disintegration of what comes towards us, and therefore the impoverishment of the self]. This form of integration alienates immigrants, a phenomenon called by Todorov, in his interview with Laurent Marchand, “déculturation” [deculturation], which he defines as “la disparition ou la non construction d’une sorte de structure de personnalité de base à partir de laquelle on acquiert les éléments d’une culture.” [The disappearance or the non-construction of a sort of structure of personality basis from which we acquire the elements of a culture.] Instead, Glissant proposes a politics of Relation of integration, which guarantees visibility, and fosters a spirit of solidarity between the different members of the community: “L’intégration des immigrants ne pourrait se faire en harmonie qu’à partir d’une politique de la Relation” (*Une nouvelle région du monde* 175). [The integration of the immigrants would be done in harmony only via a politics of Relation.]

Glissant’s politics of Relation is an open model that is free from the aforementioned archaic barriers. In *Philosophie de la Relation*, he develops this politics

of Relation through the question of the border that he exposed in his diagnosis of the debate on national identity and immigration. He demonstrates that the border model of Sarkozy administration is problematic because it is the reproduction of the divisive colonial model, which he criticizes as unfair: “Les frontières les plus injustes furent tracées par les envahisseurs et coupent à travers les maisons et les jardins, rejetant les parentés d’un impossible” (59). [The most unjust borders were traced by the invaders and cut through the houses and the gardens, rejecting the relatedness of two sites of an impossible.] Glissant proposes a new politics of borders that interrelate nations and people from distinct yet indistinct “étendues” [stretches]: “L’idée de la frontière nous aide à soutenir et apprécier la saveur des différents quand ils s’apposent. Passer la frontière, ce serait relier librement une vivacité du réel à une autre” (*Philosophie de la Relation* 57). [The idea of the border helps us support and appreciate the attractiveness of the differences when they are applied. Crossing the border would mean to freely connect an intensity of the real to another one.]

This new conceptualization of the border is developed in his assessment of the project of Francophonie. Considering the politics of Francophonie as exclusive in nature, being one of those walls or borders to cross, Glissant collaborates with other writers from the Francosphere including France to propose a new an inclusive approach based on his notion of “Tout-monde.” Under the direction of Michel Le bris and Jean Rouaud, writers and theorists such as Amin Maalouf, Nancy Houston, Maryse Condé, Jean Vautrin, Jean-Marie Le Clézio, Azouz Begag, Abdourahman Waberi, Leïla Sebbar, the movement has published two important manifestoes: *Pour une littérature-monde* (2007) and *Je est un autre: Pour une identité-monde* (2010), which question the project of Francophonie.

In his interview with Philippe Artières, “Solitaire et solidaire,” Glissant deconstructs the barriers set up by Francophonie for a more open world in general and the Francosphere in particular. This vision is also presented in one of his essay prior to the publication of the manifestoes, *Traité du Tout-monde* (1997):

Parlons à la France, non pas pour la combattre, ni pour en être les servants, ni pour en être les appointés, mais pour lui dire d’une seule voix que nous allons entreprendre autre chose. Expliquons-lui aussi que la norme de sa langue serait bientôt caduque ... si la langue ne courait pas les hasards du monde. Et que nous l’avons transmuée, cette langue, la prenant avec nous.
(228)

Let us talk to France, neither to combat it, nor to be its servants, nor its appointees, but to tell it in one voice that we are going to undertake something else. Let us explain to it too that the norm of its language would be outdated ... if the language did not follow the unpredictability of the world. And, that we have mutated, this language, taking it with us.

Glissant’s representation of the Francophonie and the French language in particular is in correlation with his politics of language theorized as “langue écho-monde” [world-echoing language], an important feature of his concept of Tout-monde, which will mainly analyzed in the last chapter of the dissertation.

In conclusion, Glissant’s response in his oeuvre in general and *Quand les murs tombent* in particular has well explicated the recurrent debate launched by the Sarkozy administration on national identity and immigration in France. Even though the main focus is on France, it offers an actualized assessment of how France maintains its

multilateral relations with its former colonies through the presence of the latter's ambassadors, the immigrants. Glissant's proposition to transform the nation state into a relational nation in a creolized world, a "Tout-monde," is a potential alternative for the West and the Rest to engage in a collaborative effort to redress the current situation of this world in which the Self, the non-nomad, is more and more in dire need of the Other, the nomad.

CHAPTER IV:

TOWARDS IMAGINARY WHOLELANDS

Glissant est celui qui nous aide à penser le 21^{ème} siècle grâce aux concepts de “créolisation” et celui du “Tout-monde.” De la Martinique, il a vu arriver le monde, mieux que l’on fait les intellectuels des dits grands pays, engoncés dans leur passé glorieux...

François Durpaire. Hommage à Glissant dans *Respect Mag*.

Glissant is the one who helps us think the 21st century thanks to his concepts of “creolization” and that of the “Tout-monde.” From Martinique, he has seen the world arrive, better than the intellectuals of the so-called great countries, bundled up in their glorious past...

François Durpaire. Tribute to Glissant in *Respect Mag*.

In my analysis of Glissant’s poetics and politics in the first two chapters, “Representing the Black Experience in Edouard Glissant’s Poetics” and “The Archipelagic Exception,” I have argued that Glissant’s Antillanité is situated between Negritude and Créolité. In other words, I have perceived it as “the bridge that leads from Negritude to Créolité” (Shirley Lewis 72). This revolutionary stance is symbolically embedded in his advocacy of the “tout” [whole], an indefinite pronoun he uses to theoretically merge the essentialist singular personal pronoun “je” of Negritude and the anti-essentialist plural personal pronoun “nous” [we] of Créolité.

In his interview “De la nécessité du poétique en temps de crise” [In Need of Poetics in times of Crisis] with Georgia Makhlouf, Glissant justifies the pertinence of the “tout” by arguing that the role of the contemporary writer is to adopt a holistically

encompassing interpretation of the world: “J’ai toujours pensé que l’écriture était vaine si elle ne savait pas s’ancrer *dans* le monde.” [I have always thought that writing was vain if it could not be rooted *in* the world.] Glissant implements this rootedness in the world in his “écriture différée” [deferred writing], which he defines as “dire sans dire tout en disant” [telling without telling while telling], to conceive the new and complex realities of the Caribbean archipelago in particular and those of the world by extension.

In *Philosophie de la Relation*, Glissant theorizes a new configuration of the world:

[N]ous ne voyons plus le monde en matière grossière et projective: et par exemple, comme hier, cinq continents, quatre races, plusieurs grandes civilisations, plusieurs périodes de découvertes et de conquêtes, des avenants réguliers à la connaissance, un devenir à peu près devinable. (27)

[W]e do not see any more the world in discourteous and projective manner: and for example, like before, five continents, four races, lots of great civilizations, lots of stages of discoveries and conquests, regular amendments to knowledge, a future approximately guessable.

This new conceptualization of the world is indeed co-opted in the more popular political manifestoes analyzed in the last part of the second chapter of this dissertation namely *Manifeste pour les produits de haute nécessité* and *Traité pour le Grand Dérangement*. Glissant’s collaborators readapted his own “vision extériorisée” [exteriorized vision] in their specific interpretation of the 2009 General Strikes in the French Caribbean.⁴² In *Traité pour le Grand Dérangement*, they define their holistic approach as follows:

⁴² See Phillipe Chanson’s article “Identité et Altérité chez Edouard Glissant et Patrick Chamoiseau: Scripteurs de la Parole Créole” [Identity and Otherness in the oeuvres of Edouard Glissant and Patrick

Nous avons fréquenté avec profit l'idée du métissage, les imprévisibles mélanges de la Créolisation, la poétique de la Relation d'Edouard Glissant. Nous nous sommes inscrits dans une complexité qui ouvre la conscience aux diversités de l'existant, qui les relie, les rallie, et qui nous initie par là-même aux fluidités insondables du Tout-Monde. (15)

We have interestingly revisited the idea of metissage, the unpredictable mélanges of Creolization, the poetics of Relation of Edouard Glissant. We were inscribed in a complexity that opens the consciousness to diversities of the existing, which links, rallies, and initiates us thereby to the unfathomable fluidities of the Tout-Monde.

The Tout-monde, which I will discuss at length in the first part of this chapter, is a visionary alternative used by Glissant to urge his audience to engage with the different worlds of the World. Celia Britton demonstrated how groundbreaking this concept is in Glissant's oeuvre: "[L]e concept de 'Tout-Monde' constitue un tournant majeur dans la pensée de Glissant introduisant une vision plus optimiste du monde" ("Langues et languages" 235). [[T]he concept of 'Tout-Monde' constitutes a major turn in Glissant's thought introducing a more optimistic vision of the world.] Through this concept, Glissant actually perceives the world as a new region,

une époque, mêlant tous les temps et toutes les durées, une époque aussi
qui est un inépuisable pays, accumulant les étendues, qui se cherchent

Chamoiseau: Scriptwriters of the Creole Word.] In this article, Chanson contrasts Glissant's "vision extériorisée" [exteriorized vision] and the Creolists' "vision intérieure" [interiorized vision] in their definition of Créolité in their *Eloge de la Créolité* as a "vecteur esthétique majeur de la connaissance de nous-mêmes" (25) [major aesthetic medium of the knowledge of ourselves].

d'autres limites, en nombre incalculable mais toujours fini, ainsi qu'on a dit des atomes. (*Une nouvelle région du monde* 24)

a period, which merges all times and durations, a period which is also an inexhaustible country, accumulating all the areas, which search for other limits, in an incalculable number but always finished, as it was said about the atoms.

Over the course of my analysis of Glissant's imaginary wholelands in this chapter, I will bring together the distinct yet indistinct spaces of Africa, the Caribbean, and France as respectively discussed in the preceding chapters. In the first part, I will analyze Glissant's Tout-monde as an imaginary world of communion between the different "étants" of the world in the West and the Rest, the colonial and the postcolonial eras and areas. I will particularly focus on Glissant's concept of the world, the power of the imaginary, and his poetics and politics of relational language through his theorization of "langue écho-monde" [world echoing language], a perspective that accommodates the two main stances in the politics of language in postcolonial studies. In the second part, I will discuss his socio-political vision of the Tout-monde through his praise of differences and his political notion of "mondialité" as an alternative to the dominant phenomenon of "mondialisation" [globalization] for a better world wherein each being breathes "l'oxygène du monde" [the oxygen of the world] as imaginatively expressed by Chamoiseau in his interview with Abdellatif Chaouite "Les guerriers de l'imaginaire" [The Warriors of the Imaginary].

THE TOUT-MONDE

Before the theorization of his concept of the Tout-monde in his later works in the 1990s particularly in *Tout-monde* (1995) and *Traité du Tout-monde* (1997), Glissant has always put the “monde” [world] at the center of his poetical and political interest. As early as 1953, he graduated in ethnology studies at the University of Sorbonne under the supervision of Jean Wahl with a thesis on “Découverte et conception du monde dans la poésie contemporaine” [Discovery and Conception of the World in Contemporary Poetry]. A specialist of spatial poetics and politics as analyzed in my second chapter on “The Archipelagic Exception,” Glissant was often invited to talk about this important question. At a conference during the festival of Avignon on 13 July 2009, for instance, he introduces his keynote address “Crise coloniale, crise mondiale” [Colonial Crisis, World Crisis] with a panoramic presentation of two fundamental trajectories of the History of humanity:

Alors, le monde, c'est quoi? Le monde, c'est une vision, une intuition de ce qui s'est passé dans les histoires des humanités, et qu'est-ce qu'il s'est passé? Il s'est passé deux choses: il s'est passé que les communautés se sont constituées les unes contre les autres ou avec les autres, d'où les guerres nationales, continentales, etc., et en même temps, avec un sentiment de rapprochement, ce qui a déterminé l'apparition de notions plus ou moins vagues sur lesquelles on ne peut pas mettre un contenu réel, comme par exemple, en Occident, la notion d'universel.

So, the world, what is it? The world, it is a vision, an intuition of what has happened in the histories of humanities, what happened? Two things

happened: communities were constituted ones against the others or with the others, hence continental and national wars etc., and at the same time, with a feeling of closeness, which determined the emergence of more or less vague notions on which we cannot give real content, for example in the West, the notion of the universal.

In his oeuvre, Glissant focuses on the second type of history or rather histories of humanity, which brings together different peoples. He defines it as a history of chaos, which is “le choc, l’intrication, les répulsions, les attirances, les connivences entre les cultures des peuples dans la totalité-monde contemporaine” (*Introduction à une poétique du Divers* 82). [The choc, the interweaving, the repulsions, the attractions, the connivances between the cultures of the peoples in the contemporary world in totality.]

Glissant’s Tout monde originates from the chaotic conquest and discovery of the Rest by the West. In other words, the historical events of slavery and colonialism, “the necessary evils” or “crimes fondateurs” [founding crimes] to use Chamoiseau’s terminology in the rountable discussion “De l’esclavage au Tout-monde,” are the bases of the Tout-monde. In an interview with Tony Delsham, Glissant specifically announces the nascence of his Tout monde: “[L]a rencontre, souvent violente, des peuples et des cultures est aujourd’hui condition d’une nouvelle manière d’être dans le monde, d’une identité enracinée dans un territoire mais riche de tous les terroirs mis en relation.” [[T]he encounter, often violent, of the peoples and their cultures is today a condition of a new way to be in the world, a deep-rooted identity in a territory yet rich in all the nations in relation.]

Glissant's Tout-monde is therefore based on the past "inter-retro-actions,"⁴³ the shared experiences of the "anciens découvreurs et anciens découverts, anciens colonisateurs et anciens colonisés" (*Philosophie de la Relation* 33) [former discoverers and former discovered, former colonizers and former colonized]. Comparatively speaking, Glissant's Tout-monde echoes Bhabha's third space, an in-between world that puts productively into relation the aforementioned seemingly opposite worlds:

It is significant that the productive aspects of this Third Space have a colonial or a postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory...may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of the cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*.

(*The Location of Culture* 56)

Glissant's Tout-monde and Bhabha's third space are worlds of interrelation between the former colonized and colonizers. In *Quand les murs tombent*, Glissant sums well this interrelation in his assessment of the historical relations between France and Martinique and by extension France and its other worlds, the West and the Rest: "L'Occident est en nous et nous sommes en lui" (13). [The West is in us and we are in it.]

Besides Glissant's conceptualization of the world as a historically "chaotic" space, the other fundamental characteristic of his world is that of the imaginary. In his articulation of the power of the imaginary, he urgently urges his be-ings to imaginatively project themselves into active protagonists in the rendez-vous of "donner-recevoir-

⁴³ Term borrowed from Edgar Morin by Glissant et al in *Traité pour le Grand Dérangement* 8.

rendre” (*Traité du Grand Dérangement* 7) [give-receive-give back].⁴⁴ This consideration is encapsulated in his theoretical description of the “triple intuition du poétique” [triple intuition of the poetics] highlighted in the aforementioned keynote address. Glissant defines: “La poétique, c’est une intuition du monde et cà, c’est beaucoup plus grave que la diction, l’écriture, la récitation de poèmes ou de poésie, etc. La poétique c’est l’intuition et la divination de notre rapport à nous mêmes, à l’autre et au monde.” [Poetics is the intuition of the world and this is more serious than diction, writing, recitation of poems or poetry, etc. Poetics is the intuition and the divination of our relationship to ourselves, the other, and the world.] This strategic plan entails “se penser, penser avec le monde et se penser avec le monde (*Quand les murs tombent* 15-16) [thinking oneself, thinking with the world, and thinking oneself with the world].

In *Introduction à une poétique du Divers*, Glissant demonstrates the preponderance of the imaginary in the articulation of his Tout-monde poetics in particular and in our attitudes vis-à-vis our current creolized world in general:

Tant qu’on n’aura pas accepté l’idée, pas seulement en son concept mais *par l’imaginaire* des humanités, que la totalité-monde est un rhizome dans lequel tous ont besoin de tous, il est évident qu’il y aura des cultures qui seront menacées. Ce que je dis c’est que ce n’est ni par la force, ni par le concept qu’on protégera ces cultures, mais *par l’imaginaire* de la totalité-monde, c’est-à-dire par la nécessité vécue de ce fait: que toutes les cultures ont besoin de toutes les cultures. (33)

⁴⁴ Glissant and his collaborators develop this relational maxim of “donner-recevoir-rendre” in their “principe du gratuit solidaire” [principle of gratis solidarity] as an alternative to the capitalist dogma of donnant-donnant [give and take]. It is indeed one of the bases of their notion of “économie relationnelle” [relational economy], a notion I will develop in the last part of this chapter.

As long as we will not accept the idea that, not only in its concept but also through the imaginary of humanities, the world in its totality is a rhizome in which everybody needs everybody, it is obvious that there will be cultures that will be threatened. What I am saying is that it is neither by force nor by concept that we will protect these cultures, but by the imaginary of the world in totality, which is to say by the lived necessity of this fact: that all cultures need all cultures.

Glissant dissects in practice the concept of imaginary in *Philosophie de la Relation* through the “pensée du tremblement” [the thought of the trembling], a projection “accordée aux vibrations et aux séismes de ce monde, aux modes cataclysmiques de rapports entre les sensibilités et les intuitions, et qui peut-être nous met à même de connaître l’inextricable sans en être embarrassés” (54) [attributed to vibrations, and earthquakes of this world, cataclysmic modes of relations with the sensibilities and intuitions, and that may put us from knowing the inextricable without being embarrassed].

The thought of the trembling is way for the self to commiserate with the other in hard times by imaginatively transporting the experience of the other’s affected world in his or her own. In other words, whenever natural catastrophes happen in a particular area and are broadcast on the mass media in general and the television in particular, viewers around the world immediately sympathize because they imagine themselves consciously or unconsciously in the victim’s position: “Je pense immédiatement au tremblement de terre *qui surviendra* dans mon pays” (*Introduction à une poétique du Divers* 27). [I think immediately of the earthquake *that will happen* in my country.]

In terms of communication, Glissant's theoretical development of language in general and his concept of "langue écho-monde" [world echoing-language] in particular is an exemplary element that explicates well the power of imaginary in Glissant's *Tout-monde*. Through this strategic tool, Glissant "has attained a perspective from which it is possible to see the postcolonial situation as a part of a larger puzzle and understood that the resolution of the postcolonial problems requires a sense of how the totality can be repaired" (Prieto 114). How does Glissant's position stand out from the two classical stances of other leading postcolonial figures such as Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o?

As early as the emerging stages of postcolonial studies after the independence of a great deal of colonial dominions in the 1960s, the politics of language has been at the center of discussion in the intellectual spheres. The discussion has followed basically two main routes. On the one hand, there has been the direction of adopting the colonial language and on the other its rejection and the renaissance of national languages.⁴⁵

The adepts for the adoption of the colonial language defend that the latter is a tool for the unification of different Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone nations across the colonized world in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Political leaders across these aforementioned areas resorted to "the language of the criminal" (Jamaica Kincaid 32) to initiate Tri-continental alliances during the decolonialization process. Even though they all agree on the negative impact of colonialism, they recognize its slight advantageous contribution. Achebe, who was among the leading figures of this particular group, argues, "Let us give the devil its due: colonialism in Africa disrupted many things, but it did create big political units where there were small scattered ones before...It gave [people] a

⁴⁵ Refer to the historic 1962 Makerere Conference on the language of African literature.

language with which to talk to another” (*The African Writer* 430). In the literature context in Nigeria, he also stresses that the colonial language, the “one central language enjoying nationwide currency” (77-78) facilitated the emergence of a national literature in lieu of ethnic literatures in Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo among others.

However, this adoption of the colonial language is far from being a blind reproduction of it. Instead, these adepts of the colonial language encourage its adaptation to the realities of the colonized land. Achebe argues that the postcolonial artist must create a new version of the colonial language “still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new surroundings” (434). In his canonical novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) for instance; he inaugurates an Africanized version of English through a syncretic manipulation of oral and written forms. Not only does he introduce some Igbo words but also he revives orature through storytelling and proverbs, the main characteristics of the Igbo art of conversation. He presents palaver tree talks of the elders and custodians of Umofian society, who fill their speeches with proverbs, “the palm-oil with which words are eaten” (7).

In contrast, defenders of the local languages question the politics of language of the “Afro-European.” Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, one of their fiercest opponents, poses a fundamental question in *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of the Language of African Literature* (1986): “What is the difference between a politician who says Africa cannot do without imperialism and the writer who says Africa cannot do without European languages?” (162). In response to his own question, he argues that the adoption or the adaptation of the colonial language is but a form of legitimization of the European colonial rule. To decolonize the mind of the colonized, the latter must revive his or her

rich languages, the “carriers of cultures,” locally, nationally and internationally: “I believe that my writing in Gikuyu language, a Kenyan language, an African language, is part and parcel of the anti-imperial struggles of Kenyan and African peoples” (163).

Furthermore, Ngugi stresses that people in general and the colonized in particular must first and foremost develop and use their own language before opening up to the rest of the community, the nation and the world including the colonial world. He elaborates a gradual process of multilingual openness to the world from the particular to the general, the personal to the communal:

With that harmony between himself, his language, and his environment as his starting point, he can learn other languages and even enjoy the positive humanistic, democratic and revolutionary elements in other people’s literatures and cultures without any complexes about his own language, his own self, his environment. (164)

Using his own Kenyan context, Ngugi recommends that Kenyans, for instance, to first learn Kiswahili, Kenya’s lingua franca, then the other Kenyan languages (Gikuyu, Luo, Kallenjini), followed by some African languages (Zulu, Fulani, Wolof, etc.) before learning the languages that are “foreign to Africa” (Arabic, French, English, Portuguese, etc.).

Breaking free from or through this binary controversy over the politics of language in the postcolony, Glissant develops a different theory that accommodates both the colonial and the local languages. His theoretical definition of the Creole language, a composite language, which combines heterogeneous linguistic elements, expresses this communion in *Le discours antillais*:

La langue créole apparaît comme organiquement liée à l'expérience mondiale de la Relation. Elle est littéralement une conséquence de la mise en rapport de cultures différentes, et n'a pas préexisté à ces rapports. Ce n'est pas une langue de l'être, c'est une langue du Relaté. (241)

The Creole language appears to be organically linked to the cross-cultural phenomenon worldwide. It is literally the result of contact between different cultures and did not preexist this contact. It is not a language of a single origin, it is a cross-cultural language. (127)

Moreover, Glissant is not uniquely interested in the issues restricted to the postcolony in his articulation of his politics of language. As mentioned earlier in the quotation from Prieto's article, "Edouard Glissant: Littérature-monde and Tout-monde," Glissant expands his poetics and politics of language to the "Tout-monde" through his notion of "langue écho-monde" [world echoing language], which is a new form of multilingualism that does not necessitate speaking several languages as argued by Ngugi in his gradual process of linguistic openness developed earlier. Glissant defines multilingualism in *Introduction à une poétique du Divers* as follows:

[L]e multilinguisme ne suppose pas la coexistence des langues ni la connaissance de plusieurs langues mais la présence des langues du monde dans la pratique de la sienne; c'est cela que j'appelle le multilinguisme. (41)

[M]ultilingualism implies neither the coexistence of languages nor the knowledge of several languages but the presence of the languages of the world in the use of my own; this is what I call multilingualism.

Glissant's concept of "the world echoing language"⁴⁶ blocks any tentative of superimposition of the so-called universal languages, the "langues orgueilleuses" [over-proud languages.] He considers the notion of the universal language as a violation of the concept of language itself because every language, whether African, European, Caribbean, Asian is Creole in nature. His concept of world echoing language favors then a constant interdependence between different languages as he mentions in *Poétique de la Relation*: "Je te parle dans ta langue mais c'est dans la mienne que je te comprends" (122). [I speak to you in your language voice, and it is in my language use that I understand you (107).]

In the context of writing, Glissant's world echoing language offers a revolutionary perspective in postcolonial studies. In lieu of a choice of a particular language over the others, he proposes an imaginary use of language:

Je parle et surtout j'écris en présence de toutes les langues du monde
[...] je ne peux plus écrire de manière monolingue. C'est-à-dire que ma
langue, je la déporte et la bouscule non pas dans des synthèses, mais
dans des ouvertures linguistiques qui me permettent de concevoir les
rapports des langues entre elles aujourd'hui sur la surface de la terre.

(*Introduction à une poétique du Divers* 39-40)

I speak and mostly write in the presence of all languages. I cannot
write any more in a monolingual fashion. That is to say that my
language, I deport it and shake it not in the syntheses, but in linguistic

⁴⁶ See also Lise Gauvin's concept of Tout-langue in her contribution "L'imaginaire des langues: Tracées d'une poétique" in *Poétiques d'Edouard Glissant* (280) [The Imaginary of Languages : Tracks of a Poetics.

openings that enable me to conceive the relations between languages
today on the surface of the earth.

Glissant's politics of language depicts well his Tout-monde, as it works as a relational tool that enables be-ings to engage with one another in this diverse world of differences.

IN PRAISE OF DIFFERENCES

Un détail n'est pas un fragment, il interpelle la totalité. *Philosophie de la Relation* (102)

A detail is not a fragment it brings into being totality.

In Glissant's definition of his Tout-monde, one of the most determinant elements is that of difference. This characteristic is commonly interrelated in the articulation of his well-known concept of "divers" [diversality], which is a recurrent motif in most of his essays such as *Introduction à une poétique du Divers*, *Poétique de la Relation*, *Philosophie de la Relation*, and *Traité du Tout-monde*. In the latter, for instance, he presents his Tout-monde as a perpetual world of diversality: "Notre univers tel qu'il change et en même temps la "vision" que nous en avons. La totalité-monde dans sa diversité physique et dans les représentations qu'elle nous inspire" (176). [Our universe as it changes and at the same time the "vision" we have of it. The world in totality in its physical diversity and the representations it inspires us.]

Glissant uses diversality to recapture the rapidly changing complexities of the world from the West to the Rest. As early as the publication of *Le discours antillais* in the early 1980s, Glissant announces the inevitable transitional evolution of the world:

Nous apprécions les avatars de l'histoire contemporaine comme épisodes
inaperçus d'un grand changement civilisationnel, qui est passage: de
l'universel transcendantal du Même, imposé de manière féconde par

l'Occident, à l'ensemble diffracté du Divers conquis de manière de moins en moins féconde par les peuples qui ont arraché aujourd'hui leur droit à la présence au monde. (190)

We are aware of the fact that the changes of our present history as the unseen moments of a massive transformation in civilization, which is the passage from the all-encompassing world of cultural Sameness, effectively imposed by the West, to a pattern of fragmented Diversity, achieved in a no less creative way by the peoples who have today seized their rightful place in the world. (97)

Diversity enables the former dominated peoples of the world to be more visible and contribute to the evolution of the world. In other words, it elevates them from passivity to activity, consumption to production, as I will demonstrate in more detail in the last part of this chapter in my analysis of Glissant's political profession of mondialité as "the positive flipside of Globalization" as argued by Chris Bongie in *Friends and Enemies: The Scribal Politics of Post/Colonial Literature* (335).⁴⁷

This concept of diversity is revived by the Creolists in their promotion of the Creole identity in the French Caribbean. One of its most influential pioneers, Patrick Chamoiseau, readopts this concept of "divers" into "diversel" [diversal] in *Ecrire en pays dominé* as a "manière de penser l'homme au monde et d'envisager son épanouissement diversel" (315) [way of thinking the people to the world and contemplate their diversal plenitude]. This "plenitude" comes into being by the popular recognition of the differences that exist in the Tout-monde, a world characterized first and foremost "par le

⁴⁷ See his Part III "Exiles on Main Stream: Browsing the Franco-Caribbean," and particularly his chapter 7 "Spectres of Glissant: Dealing in Relation" (322-370).

distension et le détail de ses situés et de ses dérivés” (*Philosophie de la Relation* 34) [by the distension and the detail of its situations and derivations]. In their poetic and political assessment of the phenomenal election of Barack Obama in 2008 in *L'intraitable beauté du monde*, Glissant and Chamoiseau assimilate it to “une solution à des impossibles ethniques, raciaux et sociaux” (20) [a solution to ethnical, racial, and social impossibilities]. In other words, Obama’s election is but a victory of differences as it unpredictably brings into relation different fragments of the American society:

M. Barack Obama était imprévisible, dans un pays où toute idée de rencontre, de partage, de mélange, était violemment repoussée par une grande population, blanche et noire. Sa victoire, qui est bien la leur, n’est pourtant pas en premier celle des Noirs, mais celle du dépassement de l’histoire étasunienne par les Etats-Unis eux-mêmes. (8)

Mr Barack Obama was unpredictable in a country where any idea of encounter, sharing, mélange was violently rejected by a major white and black population. His victory, which is indeed their, is not first and foremost that of the Blacks, but that of the surpassing of US history by the US themselves.

This victory of relational differences has the potential of transforming the United States from a nation state into a relational nation all the more because it opens up a set of possibilities for the minorities in general in their struggles to establish their visibility in the process of decision making locally, nationally and internationally.

Barack Obama’s presidential bid accentuates how determinant the votes of the minority groups are in the competition between the two main parties in the US, the

Republican and the Democratic. As a matter of illustration, the last presidential elections displayed the changing political demographic landscape with the rush for the votes of the minority groups in general and that of the Latino constituency in particular, which actually determines the fate of the nation as a whole.

Moreover, Glissant argues that this victory of differences must be viewed by Americans as an opportunity to reconnect with the outside world as advocated by Obama himself in his popular campaign promises to engage with their “friends as well as their enemies.” Therefore he invites the entire American population to have a fresher look at the world:

Les relations du monde avec les Etats Unis sont compliquées, le plus souvent fondées sur des rapports de force. Barack Obama est élu président des Etats-Unis, l’important n’est pas du tout que le monde en appréciera mieux ce pays. L’important est que les Etats-Unis en apprécieront. (34-35)

The relations of the world with the United States are complicated, most of the times based on power struggle. Barack Obama is elected president of the United States, what is important is not at all that the world will appreciate better the world. What is important is that the United States will appreciate the world.

It is worth noting that Obama’s phenomenal victory is also meant to be a serious lesson to the world in general and the Western countries in particular. Glissant and Chamoiseau relate in a fairly deplorable fashion the reception of this phenomenal political event in Europe in particular: “Aujourd’hui, en France comme dans beaucoup d’autres pays favorisés, chacun cherche son Nègre...et bientôt les partis politiques exhiberont sans

doute leurs oriflammes en ‘diversité’ sombre” (32). [Today in France as well as in many developed countries, everybody is looking for their Negro... and soon the political parties will undoubtedly fly high their black ‘diversity’ banner.] This observation has been all the truer because there have been recurrent attempts from the political parties in most European countries to “hybridize” their representation with the nomination of minority members at influential positions particularly in the sectors directly involving the vast majority of immigrants.

Currently, in the Hollande socialist administration in France, one of the most influential members is the Guyanese political leader, Christiane Taubira, who currently occupies the important cabinet of Ministry of Justice. In Italy also, Cecile Kyenge of Congolese descent occupied the cabinet of Ministry of Integration from April 2013 to February 2014. Unfortunately, these nominations have in fact created more problems than solutions because they have been fusing more and more tensions between the minorities and the populist groups, “the intimate enemies of democracy” as argued by Todorov in his book that bears the same title.

Racist groups from the far right parties in general are frequently marginalizing and victimizing minority leaders with retrograde monkey signs. In France, one of the most popular incidents is that of Anne Sophie Léclerc, a member of the National Front, who publicly posted on her Facebook page two pictures of Christiane Taubira: the first one as a 18 month old monkey and the second as a current Minister of Justice with a sign-off that reads: “A la limite, je préfère la voir dans un arbre accrochée aux branches que de

la voir au gouvernement.” [In the worst of cases, I prefer to see her in a tree hung on the branches than seeing her in the government.]⁴⁸

Figure 2: Taubira Caricatured



A 18mois

Maintenant

Similarly, Kyenge, the first Black female minister in the history of Italy, mockingly referred to as the Zulu or the Congolese monkey was also publicly insulted by political leaders such as Roberto Calderoli, the vice-president of the Senate and a member of the Italian Lega Nord [Northern League] political party. All these incidents demonstrate a lack of commitment from the current socio-political leaders of the world in general and those of the West in particular in developing a true politics of inclusion, a sort of relational political agenda, which cultivates a mutual dialogue between the self

⁴⁸ Picture uploaded from sistadiaspora.com posted on 18 November 2013.

and the other, the natives and the immigrants, as relatively introduced in the previous chapter on “France Disenfranchising.”

In his analysis of Glissant’s concept of Relation⁴⁹ as a “window” onto the latter’s theories of diversity and difference, Georges Desportes notes in *La paraphilosophie de Glissant* (2008), “Dans le chaos-monde actuel, il est nécessaire que chacun...poursuive une piste identitaire à la rencontre de l’autre” (59). [In the current chaos-world, it is necessary that everyone...should follow an identitarian track that leads to the other.] This journey is an enriching enterprise because this encounter between two seemingly opposite parties breeds a mutual understanding and collaboration in the resolution of the issues faced by the Tout-monde as elaborated earlier in the analysis of Glissant’s thought of the trembling in the first part of this chapter.

In her contribution, “La poétique de la diversité dans les essais d’Edouard Glissant” [Poetics of Diversity in the essays of Edouard Glissant], Mary Gallagher defines this enriching encounter between the self and the other as “une perspective organique [où] il est possible d’appréhender à la fois la particularité relationnelle des peuples et des pays et leur insertion dans la totalité ouverte et composite qu’est l’unité concrète du monde” (29) [an organic perspective [where] it is possible to apprehend hand in hand the relational particularity of peoples and countries and their insertion in the open and composite totality, which is the concrete unity of the world]. As implicitly suggested in Gallagher’s quotation, both the self and the other preserve the particular traits of their identity in their engagement with the Tout-monde.

⁴⁹ See Glissant’s definition of Relation as “la quantité réalisée de toutes les différences sans en excepter une seule” (*Philosophie de la Relation* 42) [the realized quantity of all differences without any exclusion].

In *Philosophie de la Relation*, Glissant explicitly determines the parameters of this encounter between the self and the other: “La part d’opacité aménagée entre l’autre et moi, mutuellement consentie (ce n’est pas un apartheid), agrandit sa liberté, confirme aussi mon libre choix, dans une relation de pur partage, où échange et découverte et respect sont infinis, *allant de soi*” (69). [The share of opacity arranged between the other and I mutually consented (it is not an apartheid), extends his/her freedom, confirms my free choice, in a relationship of pure sharing, where exchange and discovery and respect are infinite, *going without saying*.] Glissant’s diversity is in sharp contrast with the acclaimed forms of multiculturalism in Western countries.

In *L’intraitable beauté du monde*, he defines this particular system as a sort of juxtaposition of cultures where some cultures are more visible than others:

Les deux groupes identitaires d’origine, blanc et noir se sont séparés, comme deux entités inapprochables l’une de l’autre. Les autres groupes ethniques et nationaux se sont par ailleurs juxtaposés (ce qu’on appelait le multiculturalisme), sans beaucoup se mêler. (11)

The two identity groups of origins, white and black were separated, like two inapproachable entities one from the other. The other ethnical and national groups were indeed juxtaposed (what was called multiculturalism) without fully mixing.

Instead, Glissant pleads for a new form of multiculturalism that has the potential of interrelating peoples and nations, which favors a sort of diversity in unity: “La diversité pour nous est la façon unique et innombrable de figurer le monde et de rallier ses peuplants, sa multiplicité est le principe en effet de son unité” (*Une nouvelle région du*

monde 36-37). [Diversity is for us the unique and innumerable fashion to represent the world and to rally its inhabitants; its multiplicity is the very principle of this unity.]

Diversity and difference are interrelated in Glissant's poetics all the more because the ultimate manifestation of this new form of multiculturalism, that is to say diversity in unity, is the recognition and acceptance of differences by all be-ings, the active participants of the *Tout-monde*. In other words, diversity can be perceived simply as the harmonious co-presence of differences, praised by Glissant as the "ultimate beauty of the world." In his aforementioned interview with Georgia Makhoulf "De la nécessité de l'esthétique en temps de crise," Glissant argues:

La beauté, ce n'est pas le beau. Il y a dans la beauté une dimension peu évidente. Je dirais qu'elle est le point où des différences s'accordent, et non le point où des semblables s'harmonisent. La beauté est toujours imprévisible ; elle ne réside pas dans la reproduction du même.

Beauty, it is not the beautiful. There is in beauty a less obvious dimension.

I would say that it is the point where differences agree and not the point where similarities harmonize. Beauty is always unpredictable. It is not in the reproduction of the same.

Language is the example par excellence that demonstrates the beauty in differences all the more because it relates all its components in a harmonious alchemic fashion as each component articulately echoes differently its counterparts. Chamoiseau reiterates Glissant's advocacy of this "beauty" by transporting both the self and other in his world of differences, "l'imaginaire de la diversité [the imaginary of diversity] in the same interview:

[Il] ne s'agit pas d'entrer dans une sorte de tourbillon où tout le monde est confondu avec tout le monde, mais il s'agit de garder ces émergences et ces richesses qui ont été merveilleuses, ces cultures, ces visions du monde, ces langues, ces musiques, mais de sorte qu'elles appartiennent à tous et que tous, selon des modalités d'imaginaires individuels, en deviennent défenseurs. (30)

[It] is not about entering in a sort of whirlwind where everybody is confused with everybody, but it is about preserving these emergences and types of richness which were marvelous, these cultures, these views of the world, these languages, these music genres, but in a way that they belong to all, and that all, according to individual imaginary modalities, emerge as their defenders.

In most of his late essays, Glissant develops this cult of differences as a necessary enterprise for each be-ing in liberating our world from prevailing prejudices, the most common of which is racism. Glissant defines the racist as “celui qui refuse le mélange” [someone that refuses mélange]. In *Philosophie de la Relation*, Glissant develops this cult of differences through his “pensée de la Relation” [Relation Thinking]: “Elle ne confond pas des identiques, elle distingue entre les différents, pour mieux les accorder. Les différents font poussière des ostracismes et des racismes” (72). [It does not confuse the identical; it distinguishes between the different, in order to harmonize it. The different dusts off all forms of ostracism and racism.]

Cultures are interdependently connected, which does not make isolation a viable option for any culture, be it peripheral or central: “Le monde se créolise, toutes les

cultures se créolisent à l'heure actuelle dans leurs contacts entre elles. Les ingrédients varient, mais le principe même est qu'aujourd'hui, il n'y a plus une seule culture qui puisse prétendre à la pureté" (*Introduction à une poétique du Divers* 125-6). [The world is creolized; all the cultures are creolized nowadays in their contacts. The ingredients vary, but the very principle is that today; there is not a single culture that can pretend to its purity.] Therefore, the self and the other must communally take on their shares in the ongoing (re)construction of the Tout-monde by bringing the West in the Rest and the Rest in the West and adapting Glissant's mondialité as "une poétique [politique] de la diversité solidaire" (*La Cohée du Lamentin* 143) [a [political] poetics of diversity in solidarity].

In his aforementioned interview, "Les guerriers de l'imaginaire," Chamoiseau designates Glissant as the pioneer par excellence of the concept of mondialité in Francophone studies in general and in Caribbean thought in particular: "Le mot mondialité a été proposé par Edouard Glissant. C'est lui qui développe cette idée-là pour nous distinguer du concept de mondialisation" (25). [Edouard Glissant proposed the word globality. It is he who develops this very idea to distinguish it from the concept of globalization.] This designation is all the more deserved since globality is recurrently developed in the latter's oeuvre, particularly in the late essays in which he capitalizes on important political events to express his "cri du monde" [cry of the world]. In these essays written in the last decade, he reserves a preponderant place to mondialité and mondialisation [globalization], two conceptual visions he analytically juxtaposes in his argument, in which the former represents the "flipside" of the latter. In *La Cohée du Lamentin*, Glissant gives extensively clear-cut definitions of both visions:

Ce que l'on appelle mondialisation, qui est l'uniformisation par le bas, la standardisation, le règne des multinationales, l'ultra libéralisme sur les marchés mondiaux, pour moi, c'est le revers négatif de quelque chose de prodigieux que j'appelle la mondialité. La mondialité, c'est l'aventure extraordinaire qui nous est donnée à tous de vivre aujourd'hui dans un monde qui, pour la première fois, réellement et de manière immédiate, foudroyante, sans attendre, se conçoit comme un monde à la fois multiple et unique, autant que la nécessité pour chacun de changer ses manières de concevoir, de vivre, de réagir dans ce monde-là. (15)

What is called today globalization, which is the standardization from below, conformism, the reign of multinational companies, ultra liberalism on global markets, is the negative pitfall of something prodigious that I call globality. Globality, it is the extraordinary adventure, which is given to all of us to live in a world, for the first time, really and in an immediate and striking fashion without waiting, is conceived as a world which is at the same time multiple and unique, as much as the necessity of each one to change his or her manners of conceiving, living, and reacting in this very world.

These dichotomous visions of the world by Glissant echo Maurice Merleau Ponty's philosophical theorization of the concept of "universel" [universal]. In his reference book *Signes* [Signs] (1960), he articulately juxtaposes two forms of universal: "l'universel de surplomb" [the central universal] associable to globalization and "l'universel latéral" [the lateral universal] comparable to Glissant's mondialité:

Il y a là une seconde voie vers l'universel: non plus l'universel de surplomb d'une méthode strictement objective, mais comme un universel latéral dont nous faisons l'acquisition par l'expérience ethnologique, incessante mise à l'épreuve de soi par l'autre et de l'autre par soi" (150).

There is here a second way towards the universal: no longer from the central universal of a strictly objective method but as a lateral universal by which we acquire the ethnological experience, tirelessly put to the test of the self by the other and the other by the self.

Glissant's mondialité and Merleau Ponty's lateral universal are visionary means of transportation of the be-ing, the "civilized" into the rich universe of the other, the "indigenous" as analyzed by the latter in his chapter "De Mauss à Claude Levi-Strauss" [From Mauss to Claude Levi-Strauss] in the aforementioned book.

Glissant promotes mondialité as a demarcating call out from the ongoing imperialism of the world in general and the former colonies in particular by the West. In *L'intention poétique*, he accuses the colonizer to perpetuate this dominance: "L'homme d'Occident crut 'vivre la vie du monde,' là où il ne fit souvent que réduire le monde et en induire une globalité idéale-qui n'est certes pas la totalité-monde" (27). [The Westerner thought 'living the life of the world' where he only often reduces the world and leads it into an ideal globality, which is not certainly the world in totality.] Therefore, Glissant's globality is but an appeal for a "désoccidentalisation"⁵⁰ [desoccidentalization] of the colonized world in particular and the world in general.

⁵⁰ Cf. Mary Ghallagher's contribution in *Horizons d'Edouard Glissant*.

In *Quand les murs tombent*, Glissant refutes the blameworthy attitude of the French government and by extension the West towards the colonized world on the particular issue of immigration for instance:

Ce qui menace les identités nationales, ce n'est pas les immigrations, c'est par exemple l'hégémonie étasunienne, c'est la standardisation insidieuse prise dans la consommation, c'est la marchandise divinisée, précipitée sur toutes les innocences, c'est l'idée d'une 'essence occidentale' séparée des autres et qui serait par la même devenue non humaine. (13)

What threatens national identities, it is not immigration, it is for instance the hegemony of the US, it is the insidious standardization in consumption, it is merchandizes, deified and dashed on all consciences. It is the idea of the 'western essence' separated from the others, which would become therefore inhumane.

This "western essence," which is at the basis of globalization, annihilates the other by disrupting the social sense of collectivity. In his chapter "Une tyrannie des individus" [A Tyranny of the Individual] extracted from *Les ennemis intimes de la démocratie*, Todorov argues that the superimposition of the self is detrimental to the societal system of democracy in the West:

Aujourd'hui, dans le monde occidental, l'une des principales menaces sur la démocratie ne provient pas d'une expansion démesurée de la collectivité, elle réside plutôt dans un renforcement sans précédent de

certain individus qui du coup mettent en danger le bien-être de la société dans son ensemble. (105)

Today in the Western world, one of the main threats to democracy does not come from an excessive expansion of collectivity; rather it resides in the unprecedented reinforcement of certain individuals who finally put in danger the welfare of the society as a whole.

In his enterprise of “desoccidentalizing” the world, Glissant challenges all be-ings in general and world leaders in particular to institute a relational agenda that guarantees visibility for all citizens of the world. After analytically enumerating the problems faced by the world in general in *Quand les murs tombent*, he demands for a reconstructive creation of a fair and balanced system in all domains of life: “Face à de tels renversements, il est des équilibres économiques, des aléas sociaux, des exigences de politique intérieure à inventer, maintenir ou réparer” (21). [Faced with such upheavals, there are economic balances, social risks, requirements of interior politics to invent, maintain and repair.] As a matter of fact, he wishes for the establishment of new forms of collectively relational institutions different from the World Bank, the IMF, and the World Commerce Organization, which are in fact at the mercy of the West: “Il y a là de quoi imaginer des institutions neuves qui vraiment regarderaient le monde” (22). [There is something to imagine new institutions, which would really watch for the world.]

It is worth nothing that Glissant proposes an umbrella of possible alternatives to this prevailing status quo but he does not at all give a gradually strategic plan of execution. This perspective is in phase with his promotion of “bottom-up politics” in his early essay, *Le discours antillais*, in which he puts the masses at the crux of his poetics.

He, the author, proposes but the people, the audience, dispose. He directs his Antillanité as a vision, which must “dépasser la postulation intellectuelle prise en compte par les élites du savoir et de s’ancrer dans l’affirmation collective appuyée par l’acte des peuples” (422) [transcend the intellectual pretensions dominated by the learned elite and to be grounded in collective affirmation, supported by the activism of the people (222)].

In the economic domain, Glissant rejects the assimilationist and dependent oriented nature of the capitalist dogma for a new economic model denominated as “économie relationnelle” [relational economy]. In this model, “l’économie n’est pas le seul mode de penser, ni le seul paradigme où penser, et les économistes mettent à vivre les tremblements très bouleversants du poétique (*Traité pour le grand Dérangement* 15) [economy is neither the sole mode of thinking, nor the sole paradigm from which we think, and the economists put in life the mostly affecting tremblings of the poetics]. Relational economy is an unmaterialistic economy of solidarity that fosters an “esprit mutualiste, esprit coopératif, esprit associatif” (25) [mutualist spirit, cooperative spirit, associative spirit] between the seller and the buyer. They are commonly involved in a productive exchange regulated by collective interest. This relational economy is in sharp contrast with the prevailing global economy where a groupuscule “happy few” is the sole beneficiary of the global transactions.

In the political ground, Glissant and his collaborators develop a relational form of governance in which “démocraties représentative et participative ne doivent pas s’opposer” (*Traité pour le Grand Dérangement* 23] since the leaders and as well their masses depend on another. In *Manifeste pour les produits de haute nécessité*, they develop a new portrait of the ideal leader: “L’ élu n’est pas ce délégué à qui l’on remet

son destin, mais le catalyseur de la réflexion commune émanant de la créativité sociale réhabilitée (23). [The elected is not that delegate to whom we give our destiny, but the catalyst of the communal reflection, which comes from the rehabilitated social creativity.]

This new political model of governance must be adopted and adapted by all relational nations in Glissant's Tout-monde. With his collaborators in *Traité pour le Grand Dérangement*, Glissant cultivates the "principe de citoyenneté mondiale" [principle of world citizenship]: "La citoyenneté n'est plus une notion seulement nationale mais une éthique mondiale qui transcende toutes les appartenances et qui s'impose à elles (19). [Citizenship is no longer a notion that is solely national but a world ethics that transcend all affiliation and imposes itself to them.] Therefore every be-ing becomes a world citizen whose actions, transported via "les bouillons de l'Internet et des autres formes de communication" (*Philosophie de la Relation* 35) [the flows of the Internet and other forms of communication], have consciously or unconsciously repercussions on the Tout-monde.

In my analysis of Glissant's imaginary wholelands, his Tout-monde, I have demonstrated through the articulation of Glissant's concepts of the imaginary and the world echoing language that the traditional limits set up mainly by the colonizers and the colonists are surmountable. We live in area and era in which "nos lieux sont incontournables, nous pouvons les entourer de murailles, les interdire à l'autre, mais nous pouvons les échanger sans les perdre" [our places are inescapable, we can encircle them with high defensive walls, forbid them to the other, but we can exchange them without loosing them]. Our Tout-monde needs drastic changes in all domains of life so as to

maintain a balanced system in which all be-ings have equal chances to explore and express the full potential of their differences in diversity.

CONCLUSION

L'écrivain ne s'enferme pas dans une tour d'ivoire pour élucubrer une histoire possible. Au contraire, il cherche des pistes, rassemble des faits comme l'historien. Il écoute le peuple comme l'anthropologue. Il étudie les langues comme le linguiste. Il observe l'organisation sociale comme le sociologue. Il examine l'"oikos" comme l'économiste ou l'écologiste. Il analyse la "polis" comme le politologue.

Andrès Bansart, "Le roman caribéen"

The writer does not confine himself in an ivory tower to imagine a possible history. On the contrary, he looks for traces, assembles facts like a historian. He listens to his people like an anthropologist. He studies languages like a linguist. He observes social organization like the sociologist. He examines the "oikos" like the economist or the ecologist. He analyzes the "polis" like the political specialist.

Andrès Bansart, "The Caribbean Novel"

In his analysis of Caribbean fiction in general and the Caribbean novel in particular, Bansart argues that the Caribbean writer inevitably turns into a "jack of all trades" in order to give a complete picture of his society at large. This argument is all the more plausible in the oeuvre of Edouard Glissant and particularly in the most recent works that constitute this dissertation's corpus. In these works, he fully assumes the different functions mentioned in the epigraph in the diagnosis of his native Martinique and by extension the world in its totality from the West to the Rest. As a matter of fact, his relative adoption and adaptation of a transdisciplinary approach has made him permanently successful in captivating the attention of his audience including his critics,

who continue to investigate his oeuvre through the lens of all these particular domains of specialization.

This rejection of confinement is reflected in Glissant's central thematic throughout his oeuvre as he sets up interdependence and openness as the most fundamental principles of his poetics in general. This prospective perspective is well expressed in the diagnosis of the current state of the French Caribbean DOM-TOMs by Glissant and his collaborators in *Manifeste pour les produits de haute nécessité*. In their reassessment of the aftermath of the 2009 General Strikes in the French, they encourage the LKP leadership to adopt a holistic approach in their resolution of the French Caribbean problem through a creation of a “cadre politique de responsabilité pleine dans les sociétés, martiniquaise, guyanaise, réunionnaise nouvelles, prenant leur part souveraine aux luttes planétaires contre le capitalisme et pour un monde écologiquement nouveau” [a political environment of full responsibility in Martinican, Guyanese, Reunionese new societies, which take their sovereign share in the global fights against capitalism and for a world that is ecologically new].

This open archipelagic model, which is symbolically based on the local common belief, the “Other is always listening,” promotes somehow what the French philosopher, Alain Renaut, calls “un humanisme de la diversité” [humanism of diversity] in his book that bears the same title. In this work, in which he does a panoramic analysis of different modes of diversity including Glissant's, Renaut defines this form of humanism as an ethical necessity to think and visualize the Other not only as similar but also as diverse.

Renaut's humanism of diversity is expressed in Glissant's oeuvre by his poetics and politics of Relation, which establishes solidarity between peoples, nations, and

cultures of the Tout-monde. In *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers*, he defines the relationships between the Self and the Other as follows: “Dans la rencontre des cultures du monde, il nous faut avoir la force imaginaire de concevoir toutes les cultures comme exerçant à la fois une action d’unité et de diversité libératrice” (72). [In the encounter between the cultures of the world, we must have the imaginary force of conceiving all cultures as having hand in hand an action of unity and liberating diversity.] Based on the “diversité du Un et l’unité du Divers” [diversity of the One and unity of the Diverse], Glissant’s form of humanism fosters an inclusively productive dialogue and a mutual relationship of “equality with and respect for the Other as different from Oneself” (*Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory* 11).

In his most recent political writings such as *Quand les murs tombent* and *L’intraitable beauté du monde*, and *Mémoires des esclavages*, Glissant urges the political leadership of the West to make use of the diverse nature of its population by promoting a system of integration, which “reconnâi[t] en l’autre le même, notre frère, notre égal” (*Mémoires des esclavages* 10) [recognizes the other as the same, our brother, our equal]. Immigration should thus be viewed not as a disadvantage but rather as an advantage all the more because it enriches the existence of every nation as each of its citizens benefits from the presence of its immigrant population.

This humanistic dimension is one of the most lauded characteristics of Glissant’s oeuvre by contemporary literary critics and political leaders. During the commemoration of his death, Martine Aubry, President Hollande’s runner-up during the 2012 primaries of the French Socialist Party, makes a telling testimony:

Edouard Glissant restera à jamais parmi nous, non seulement pour la beauté de ses mots et la force de son verbe, mais tout autant pour ses odes à l'humanisme et à la diversité du genre humain, antidotes de tous les préjugés et les racismes.

Edouard Glissant will remain forever among us, not only because of the beauty of his words and the power of his language, but also just as much for his odes to humanism and to the diversity of humanity, antidotes of all forms of prejudice and racism.

This humanistic perspective, which is one of the most distinguishing features of Glissant's late works, would be a potential complementary project to this dissertation. As I have analyzed in the first two chapters, Glissant's reassessment of the historical paradigms of slavery and colonialism somehow echoes Frantz Fanon's proposed approach in the conclusion of *Peau noire, masques blancs*, in which the latter urges the colonized not to be "prisoners" of these historical events. Glissant's "revolutionary" attitude vis-à-vis these defining events follows Fanon's forceful warning in the aforementioned book: "Il n'y a pas de mission nègre. Il n'y a pas de mission blanc [...] Non, je n'ai pas le droit de venir et de crier ma haine au blanc" (186). [There is no black mission; there is no white burden. [...] No, I have not the right to come and shout my hatred at the white man (203).]

Fanon's alert, which encourages the cultivation of a sense of self-surpassing and reconciliation by both colonizer and colonized, is specially taken into consideration by Glissant in his more recent works on slavery and colonialism. In *Mémoires des esclavages*, for instance, Glissant adopts a Fanonian approach in his discussion of slavery

in general and reparations, lineage, history in particular. In the fourth chapter of the book, “mémoire délivrée” [Delivered Memory], Glissant argues, “Le signe commun est alors la mémoire délivrée, délivrée des interdits et des séductions et des indifférences et des provocations et des mépris incontrôlables et des haines et des jactances et des volontés de puissance” (176). [The common sign is therefore delivered memory, delivered from taboos and seductions and indifferences and provocations and uncontrollable disregards and hatreds and chats and power will.]

This comparative analysis of the works of Glissant and Fanon would highlight their refutation of the poetics and politics of Negritude, and the evolution of their ideologies from “violent” Marxist anticolonial thinking to more reconciliatory and collaborative approaches to the world in its totality. It will basically discuss how Fanon has contributed to the redefinition of Glissant’s oeuvre from the publication of his groundbreaking book, *Poétique de la Relation* in 1990, to his more contemporary works, *Traité du Tout-monde*, *Philosophie de la Relation*, in which he develops his poetics and politics of Relation and his ideal concept of the Tout-monde.

On a fairly similar enterprise, this dissertation potentially directs to an in-depth study of Glissant’s theoretical notions of hybridity and creolization in comparison to those developed by Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, the renowned pioneers of Black British Cultural Studies. This project will focus on how Glissant has been at the forefront of the diasporic debates across the Black Atlantic popularized by these Anglophone writers and theorists. In other words, it poses the following core question: What is the contributive function of Glissant to the emergence of Black Cultural Studies? To answer this main question, the study will draw from the analyses in second chapter, “The Archipelagic

Exception,” to articulate the anti-essentialist representation of Africa, the notions of creolization, transculturation and heterogeneity.

In all, Glissant’s oeuvre remains an inexhaustible resource for current and future generations. It offers valuable lessons in almost all domains of life in the development of a more just world of change and exchange where “il n’y a[ura] plus de culture sans toutes les cultures, plus de civilisation qui puisse être metropole des autres (*Soleil de la Conscience* 13-14) [there will not be any more culture without all cultures, any more civilizations that can make others their colonies].

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